

THE LORENZO DOW FACTOR  
IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

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DAVID S. ALLEN

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## PREFACE

The church has always faced unprecedented obstacles – storming the gates of hell is no easy matter. The challenges we face today are frightening and exciting at the same time. Nevertheless we can look to the past to see how the church has advanced in the face of opposition. We see in the future a glorious goal. The saints call us to look around today at the opportunity that is ours.

A powerhouse of kingdom advance has been the Methodist church in its various iterations. The founders and stalwarts of this movement gave themselves to prayer and the study of sacred scriptures. They called people to redemption in Jesus Christ and obedience through the Holy Spirit.

Lorenzo Dow was one of those who heard that call, came to Christ, and was fashioned by the Holy Spirit into an effective evangelist. This paper tells some of his story, and places him in the movement of Methodism, and the greater development of God's plan to redeem humanity.

It is the hope of the author that this work will first, introduce you to this odd preacher, Crazy Lorenzo Dow. Then it is hoped that a survey of Methodism in England and the United States in the early years of the nineteenth century will inspire you to greater faithfulness. Finally, it is the hope and prayer of the author that the cries of thousands of needy, lost people will shake you out of the settledness that plagues the church today.

Thank you for participating in this study of a small part of God's great work in the world.



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Home is home because of René, Rachel, Rebekah, Jason & David. René – thanks for giving me time away to collect thoughts! My love forever!

Thank you, Jesus!

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the life and writings of Lorenzo Dow, an evangelist among the Methodists of the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several characteristics are extracted from his life: his strong sense of being called to preach; his defiance of the leaders of his church; and his commitment to the common citizens of the United States, Canada, Ireland and England.

The churches of Methodism in the US and England are surveyed, principles for spiritual growth among members and leaders are discussed, and standards for evangelism are presented.

Finally, a cooperative model for incorporating enterprising evangelists into the ongoing ministry of the established church with a view to adding new members to the existing and expanding church is suggested.

## PART I

LORENZO DOW

## INTRODUCTION

Why Lorenzo Dow? This writer has been fascinated by Lorenzo Dow since reading his Journal and Writings over 30 years ago. He is mentioned in the Historical Preface of my denomination's Discipline as influencing the founders of the Primitive Methodist Church in England in 1806 to challenge convention and hold what became known as "camp meeting days of prayer." This paper will tell the story of Lorenzo Dow – his 'call to preach' and his defiance of Methodist church leaders, and his eccentric preaching to thousands of frontiersmen in the young United States and even Canada, Ireland and England in the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Crazy Lorenzo Dow was an itinerant evangelist, most active in the opening years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in America, with occasional trips to Ireland and England. He is worthy of our scrutiny because of his unusual public preaching style resulting in the highest of popularity and the lowest of notoriety. Between 1799 and 1834 Americans flocked to hear him. Democrats in the new republic loved his eccentric style, and turned him into a folk hero. Parents named their sons after Lorenzo Dow.<sup>1</sup> Frontiersmen depended on Dow for their entertainment. Most working class families admired Dow, and united to memorialize Dow by attending his meetings and purchasing his books.

Dow travelled all over the young United States, and was in most of the territories before they achieved statehood. Though Americans today have not heard of him, at one time he was well-known and almost universally recognized. For good or bad, everyone was talking about him. He is worthy of our study.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Brigham Young's younger brother, Lorenzo Dow Young. All of 19<sup>th</sup> century America was influenced by Revivalism, and Lorenzo Dow was a well-known representative.

This author chose Lorenzo Dow as a suitable subject, not because of his popularity, but because of the behavior that made him popular – what this paper will refer to as the “Lorenzo Dow Factor.” Lorenzo Dow faced obstacles both geographical and ecclesiastical, but his dreams and visions of the venerable John Wesley drove him, especially in the early years, to preach the gospel everywhere. Dow kept a journal of his travels in the early years, and published this, along with his theological pamphlets, for distribution to the citizens of the small towns he visited. Over time his writings became best sellers, and Dow gained wealth through book and pamphlet sales. He was popular among the masses of new Americans because of his defiance of conventions and his commitment to the frontier working class, but as his accumulating assets made travelling easier, Dow sensed the tension of having more money than the common man. He made, and was forced to make, unwise business decisions that resulted in localized scandal, which pushed him to travel on.<sup>2</sup>

It is this very compulsion to travel that this paper will document. Along with Dow’s public image is a reputation among civil and church leaders that Dow exploited until his life was at stake. For simplicity this paper will divide Dow’s life into three unequal parts, punctuated by two events: his survival into his 23<sup>rd</sup> year of age, in defiance of a vision to the contrary, and his second return to America from across the pond – his narrow escape from arrest for treason – beginning his “Eccentric Cosmopolite” stage.

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<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; or the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: containing His Experience and Travels, in Europe and America, up to near his Fiftieth Year*, (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin and Alex. S. Robertson, 1849). Dow explains several unfortunate business transactions in the last chapters of his Journal, including his need to bail his brother-in-law out of a foolish land deal involving a non-functioning mill in Mississippi Territory, and personal land speculation and the purchase of 40,000 acres of land in North Central Wisconsin Territory, ostensibly to create a homeland for African Americans escaping slavery or in search of peace and quiet. Several thousand dollars from book and pamphlet sales were lost in these business transactions which damaged his estate, his reputation, and his ability to attend many preaching appointments.

These form Dow's beginning, middle and end. This first section will close with a brief synopsis of his writings, and with a summary of three behaviors that make up the "Dow Factor," and other "eccentricities" that made Dow the man he was.

In the first section of this paper Lorenzo Dow's qualities as an entrepreneurial evangelist will be shown: the spiritual forces made him the powerful force he was for spreading the gospel, and the talents he possessed to help populate the Methodist Church. Dow's itinerary and writings will exemplify an effort to be all things to all men, whereby we may win some.<sup>3</sup> What makes up the Dow Factor?

In the second section this paper will offer a brief survey of the churches – mostly of Methodist affiliation, in England and in the young United States – that benefitted from Dow's preaching. Then a case study of a movement based on a modified Camp Meeting as suggested by Dow will be shown. The members and lay-leaders of Methodism, supported Dow, and in return he turned his converts over to the Methodist societies for discipleship and spiritual growth. Can we harness the Dow Factor in our churches today?

In section three an analysis of individual revival and renewal will be offered, from the perspective of Jonathan Edwards, William James, and Sigmund Freud, as well as a summation of Carl Jung's take on religious revivals in the individual believer. Then the Wesleyan-Arminian dynamic of free will within a political democracy will be compared to an updated Calvinism available to the church in modern times. A form of discipleship class will be suggested, using what we know of the human person, which could implement Dow's unique methods in traditional small churches and among untrained individual believers. Is there still a place for the small church today?

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<sup>3</sup> The Apostle Paul states this is his method in 1 Corinthians 9:22.

## CHAPTER 1

### DEVELOPING THE ENTREPRENEUR: A STRONG SENSE OF CALLING

Lorenzo Dow (1777-1834) was an itinerant Revivalist evangelist, who toured all of the United States and territories and parts of eastern Canada, as well as the British Isles. “There was scarce a soul from the bayous of the southwestern frontier to the Canadian forests that had not heard and passed on the fame of Lorenzo Dow.”<sup>1</sup> Most Americans and quite a few Britons had met him and heard him preach. Perhaps only Francis Asbury was more recognized in America, and possibly Benjamin Franklin in his day may have been more popular than Lorenzo; as Forrest Gump would say, he was “famouser even than Captain Kangaroo.”<sup>2</sup> He travelled extensively, mostly by horse, but he would make his way by foot if necessary to avoid disappointing a crowd, and when Lorenzo Dow was appointed to speak, there was usually a crowd. He was a seer of visions and a worker of miracles, and creative in crowd control. Lorenzo Dow was a master at winning friends who would support him, put him up for the night, pay off his travelling debts and purchase his books, but he had no disciples and founded no order or sect.<sup>3</sup> Dow quickly learned the effectiveness of strangeness in appearance – he maintained a long, shabby beard and kept his all-black clothing well beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Coleman Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow, The Bearer of the Word*, (New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company, 1928), 3.

<sup>2</sup> The Tom Hanks character from the movie *Forrest Gump* (not the book – that Forrest was an unlikeable sot) bears a striking resemblance to Dow: both seem to fall into fame and notoriety; both seem to be in the right place at the right time; both seem to make, and be a part of history. Of course, truth is stranger than fiction, and Lorenzo Dow was both a guiding influence in the history of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a reader of currents, taking advantage of the waves of popular culture available to him.

<sup>3</sup> Sellers, 3- 4.

expiration date. He had little dignity and would play pranks on camp meeting rowdies.<sup>4</sup> He had a reputation for buffoonery in the pulpit, and though he was idolized by the populace he was loathed by the gentry and the clergy. While he had little schooling, he accumulated a vast fund of the type of information that appeals to the masses.<sup>5</sup>

He learned the value of the reputation for eccentricity – almost from the beginning he was known as “Crazy Dow” – and this drew the crowds to him.<sup>6</sup> Yet part of his eccentricity was honest. He depended on inspiration from God. Authentic inspiration, if resisted, would remain a burden on his mind; he knew that if a notion passed, it was merely a temptation. The impulse from God seemed more real the more unreasonable it was, and in his early itinerant years these inner voices and lights guided his steps, so some of his reputation as an eccentric was deserved. His inner guide seldom brought him to good in the early years. Once he learned how to appeal to people his sense of self-preservation took over, and fame was his. Unfortunately the wave of popularity eventually made wealth available to him, and some bad business decisions were forced upon him by family members, resulting in a tarnish upon his reputation. Still, after his death his image sustained enough influence to continue book sales, but was not strong enough to earn Dow a permanent place in history. Dow’s itinerant ministry from his early preaching until his death outside Washington D.C. in 1834 is made available to us through his journal and his theological writings, as well as biography. The first 19 chapters of his journal recount the difficult early years up to his second, almost disastrous

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<sup>4</sup> Camp meetings were a main source of spiritual promotion during the transition from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They had their origin in the Scottish Holy Fairs and developed into the crusades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Rowdies” would attend these events to stir up trouble and to thwart the progress of worship.

<sup>5</sup> Sellers, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Sellers, 23.



visit to England. Honesty, or naïveté characterize these early years of ministry. Following his return his journal continues under the pseudonym, “Eccentric Cosmopolite.” These chapters include a summary of years of itinerant ministry. Unlike the early chapters which seem to be partly written “as events happened,” the last three chapters of the Journal that are available jump from 1806 to 1813, and suddenly events that could only have taken place before 1816 are mixed with events from 1820. His Journal then turns into an apology for bad financial decisions that came close to destroying him, and certainly undermined his ministry.

His early ministry years were characterized by honesty. By “honest” I mean the innocent attempt to please the Lord regardless of the acceptance of the people or church leaders. This early honesty included a hefty dose of self-deception. As Dow became more mature in the second, longer half of his ministry, it is clear that he had learned what worked up the crowd, and he took full advantage of the sympathies of the people, who eventually began to question his apparent wealth through book sales. He established a commercial relationship with a good friend, Dr. Paul Johnson, from Ireland, who used Dow as his salesman for “Dr. Johnson’s Family Medicine.” His last days were gloomy – his money was lost on a land speculation gamble that did not work out, and he was married to a less-than-enthusiastic second wife.<sup>7</sup>

The study of his Journal and his published pamphlets will help us understand the Lorenzo Dow Factor in the Methodist Church.

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<sup>7</sup> Sellers, 3-32.

## The Making of Lorenzo Dow

Ephraim Dow, Lorenzo's grandfather, was a first-generation American. According to family tradition, Ephraim and his three brothers came to a decision – each would go off in a different direction to seek his fortune, presumably never to see each other again. Ephraim settled in Coventry, Connecticut, where he married Elizabeth and had several children, the oldest of whom was Humphrey, Lorenzo's father.<sup>8</sup> Humphrey was a soldier and a scholar.<sup>9</sup> He settled on his father's farm and married Tabitha Parker, who was of noble birth (through Lord Parker of Macclesfield, son of Charles II).<sup>10</sup> It is said of Dow's parents that they were Puritans (accepting the Calvinistic doctrine), but not enthusiasts.<sup>11</sup> Lorenzo claimed that "they were very tender towards their children and endeavored to educate them well, both in religion and common learning."<sup>12</sup> Humphrey and Tabitha had six children – we know the birth year of the oldest, a son named Ulysses, born in 1768. Three girls followed: Ethelinda, Mirza, and Orelana; then Lorenzo, born on

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<sup>8</sup> Coventry is due east of Hartford, CT, in Tolland County, and is the home of Nathan Hale, who, at the age of 21 volunteered for an intelligence mission to British-occupied New York. He was captured and executed by the British in September of 1776, and purportedly exclaimed, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

<sup>9</sup> During the Seven Year, or French & Indian War in colonial America from 1756 until 1763.

<sup>10</sup> Sellers, 29. Unfortunately, as popular as Dow was, we have few other sources than Sellers, whose book is written in the typical Christian Devotional Biography style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – a "telling of the story" without reference to, or any indication of sources. Most of the material in Sellers obviously comes from Dow's writings – phrases and details correspond almost exactly. Dow's Journal is not complete – he seems to stop chronicling when he enters his "Eccentric Cosmopolite" stage between 1806 and 1813, and his "Writings" launch into ramblings about his opinions and "theological or philosophical" works. In his journal one can discern times when he seems to write of events every day just after they have happened, while at other times he sits down to write of the last several weeks' events, so the authenticity depends not only on his opinion of himself, but also on his selective memory. The extant works on Dow are not as helpful as one would wish – he is often described by eye-witnesses (dressed in black, long beard, unkempt, uncouth) or if his character or delivery is the topic, his high-pitched voice or "eccentric" behavior is spoken of in general terms, which leave many questions about Dow unanswered.

<sup>11</sup> By "Calvinists but not enthusiasts" it is meant that they had not participated in the Great Awakening – they were not "New Lights."

<sup>12</sup> Sellers, 30.

October 16, 1777. The youngest was named Tabitha.<sup>13</sup> Except for living with his father on the family farm later in his married life, Dow records little about his family. His brother is not mentioned in the Journal, but the account of their one recorded interaction is fraught with sibling rivalry. Dr. Ulysses Dow left a lucrative practice to become Master of a grammar school in New London, Connecticut.<sup>14</sup> Lorenzo came to the school one day for a visit, but neglected to show the proper sign of honor when he arrived or as he was leaving. Lorenzo addressed the children in the school, then as he was preparing to leave his older brother demanded that he show proper respect for the school. Lorenzo left without doing so. Also Lorenzo told of meeting with his youngest sister Tabitha in an unsuccessful effort to persuade her to come back to the path of righteousness. He wished her well, but informed her and her family that he was unable to bid them farewell – his heart was grieved by their lack of remorse for losing their desire to follow God.<sup>15</sup> Except for Dow's first wife Peggy's regard for Dow's father, not much else is ever said of his family.<sup>16</sup> In fact, he seems to have adopted as his mother and father another older couple who showed him hospitality.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from his being sickly and asthmatic, we know little of Lorenzo's childhood.<sup>18</sup> He claimed to have developed a morbid view of life, and entertained a "thrill of horror" at thoughts of death.<sup>19</sup> At around 12 years old he bargained with God to devote

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<sup>13</sup> Sellers, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Sellers, 183.

<sup>15</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite, or, The Writings of Lorenzo Dow*. (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 154.

<sup>16</sup> Dow, 119. Dow mentions dropping in on his parents occasionally in the early year of his itinerancy, such as on page 119 of his Journal, and rejoices that one sister is more serious, but he leaves out all details. He did adopt Mamma and Papa Hobson as surrogate parents who helped him while he was travelling.

<sup>17</sup> Mamma and Papa Hobson, mentioned throughout Dow's Journal.

<sup>18</sup> According to Dow, his asthma is the reason behind his life-long habit of sleeping on the bare floor.

<sup>19</sup> Sellers, 30- 31.

his life to divine service should he take the largest prize in a lottery, which devotion he abandoned long enough to accumulate enough wickedness to feel a need to repent. His thoughts troubled him and robbed him of sleep. His dreams included the prophet Nathan telling him he would die in his twenty-second year of age.<sup>20</sup> Around age 14 he dreamed of an old man questioning his faithfulness in praying.<sup>21</sup> In his dream he was swept up to God's throne and challenged to be faithful. In later dreams he became aware that the old man was John Wesley himself. Due to his traditional Calvinistic upbringing he interpreted his misfortunes as the sign that he was elect to damnation.<sup>22</sup>

### **Developing Convictions**

Around this time the Methodists were making inroads into New England, and Lorenzo was ripe for a Wesleyan-Arminian slant on the gift of salvation. A cousin of his found pardon from God, but Lorenzo saw only the "blue blazes of hell" for himself. On the way to prayer meeting he asked God for pardon. Then in another dream he heard the Lord declare that he was to be cast into utter darkness as an unprofitable servant. When he cried out for mercy he saw the Mediator step in and he woke in happiness at having had a "solid, positive experience."<sup>23</sup> On November 12<sup>th</sup> of that year (1791) he was re-baptized with 12 others who vowed to "watch over one another."<sup>24</sup> For three years he was joined with the Methodists, and began to sense a "call" similar to that of the Apostle Paul

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<sup>20</sup> Dow, 10

<sup>21</sup> This would have been in 1791, the year John Wesley died. His passing no doubt was the subject of much conversation among all Americans, especially Methodists.

<sup>22</sup> This forlorn emphasis on double predestination and criteria for knowing the mind of God is what drove many Americans to a "home-spun" Arminianism – the currency of Methodism.

<sup>23</sup> Sellers, 31-39.

<sup>24</sup> Sellers, 40.

— his strength left him as he was on his way to a meeting. In November of 1794 he attempted to speak publicly for the first time, and had visions of an itinerant ministry, even though the Methodists tried to talk him out of such a venture.<sup>25</sup> He had a “vision” of John Wesley, who told him, “God has called you to preach the gospel; you have been a long time between hope and fear, but there is a dispensation of the gospel committed to you.” In 1796 Lorenzo obtained a horse on credit, and armed with a certificate from his local society, headed off into the wide world.<sup>26</sup>

### **Lorenzo’s Travels**

After a short preface and an annotated Table of Contents, the compiler of Dow’s *Life and Works* prints several letters of recommendation from various authorities vouching for Lorenzo Dow. It is significant that these appear so near the beginning of Dow’s Works, as Dow spent his early itinerant ministry, both in America and in Europe battling charges of being a usurper and a deceiver or, what was worse at the time, a spy.<sup>27</sup> The letters of recommendation contain descriptions of Dow, and character references, and ask that Dow be granted all privileges due a travelling minister of the Gospel. A few

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<sup>25</sup> Sellers, 42-43.

<sup>26</sup> Sellers, 44.

<sup>27</sup> Dow was accused of being, or at least conspiring with, “The Pretender.” Wesley also suffered this charge, as incongruous and anachronistic as it is. In the confusing battle between the Lancastrians and the House of York, England has been involved in debate over succession to the throne, dating back into the 1400’s. Multiple alternate “successions” were touted. To this day there are those who refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of any Parliamentary ruling since 1603. In Dow’s account of the event, not understanding or appreciating the history of the term, he was most likely being referred to as “a pretender,” and not “The Pretender.”

of the letters list names of individuals who claimed they would vouch for Dow's integrity.<sup>28</sup>

Dow began his Journal with an account of his birth in Coventry, Connecticut; mentioning that both his parents were born in the same town, and together had a son and three daughters before Lorenzo, and one daughter after him. He remembered an incident of being sick when he was two years old, while his parents were travelling. They heard he was dead and were glad to return home to find him alive and well. Dow claimed to "muse" about the Lord while he was three or four years old. During this time of musing he forgot his play and asked his friend if he engaged in prayer or religious duties. When his friend said he did not, Lorenzo renounced his company.<sup>29</sup>

Dow claimed to have been an inquisitive child, but impressionable around associates who would lie or swear. He promised himself that he would reform when he reached adulthood. The suffering of birds or animals bothered him, and he feared death, especially once when he caused the death of a small bird. He promised the Lord that he would live a righteous life if he won a local lottery – he did win the nine shillings, but broke his promise and felt unease in his conscience for some weeks.<sup>30</sup>

When he was twelve years old, Dow experienced an illness he refers to as an asthmatic disorder. He suffered greatly from asthma, during this time and throughout life, but of course it may be he had the hypochondria others in his age fell back on to explain various weaknesses or failings. In any event he received a vision that he would die in his

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<sup>28</sup> Dow, 717-720.

<sup>29</sup> Dow, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Dow, 10.

twenty-second year of age. A year later (1791) he had a dream of John Wesley encouraging him to pray.<sup>31</sup> Dow was caught up in the air to behold the Lord in heaven, with Christ seated next to him.<sup>32</sup> He received the encouragement to be faithful, and the promise that this would lead to his return to this heavenly place. He was convicted to pray and seek salvation, broke off friendships with more worldly acquaintances, and searched for the path to godly living. The doctrine of particular election troubled him, and he began to slacken the pace of his godly walk. Feeling reprobate, he determined to end his life, but chose to “omit it a few days longer, it may be that something will turn up in your favor.”<sup>33</sup>

### **God Loves Us All**

Hope Hull, a Methodist preacher,<sup>34</sup> was bringing the Methodist message of hope to western New England. Dow attended one of his meetings and felt conviction for sin. After several days of struggle and resolution to pray, his cousin found comfort, as did a brother-in-law (Fish), but no comfort for Lorenzo Dow. Young converts appointed prayer meetings for him, and he even knelt by a grove of trees to ask God to reveal Himself to him. A woman challenged him to yield to the strivings of the Spirit in him, but Dow concluded himself to be damned. After many more agonizing days he finally begged for mercy from the Lord. Once again a dream of demons wrestling for possession of his soul

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<sup>31</sup> The year of John Wesley's death.

<sup>32</sup> Did Dow consider himself to be seated at God's "left hand?" Dow experienced many such delusions of grandeur in his dreams.

<sup>33</sup> Dow, 14.

<sup>34</sup> For Hope Hull's support of O'Kelly's ministry in the United States during the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see W.J. Townsend et al., *A New History of Methodism*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 153-155.

stirred him to call out to the Lord, and Dow finally obtained deliverance.<sup>35</sup> Hope Hull introduced the teaching of “whosoever will may come.” After more wrestling with doubt, Dow “met my beloved on the way,” decided to accept that he truly did feel his sins were forgiven, and joined the Methodist Society.<sup>36</sup>

Dow describes his call to preach as an actual vision of God impressing the Great Commission upon him while he knelt before the Lord in prayer. Of course Dow protested that he was just a child – fulfilling the terms of the “call” genre: he at first was unwilling, so this call could not be construed as a presumption on his part.<sup>37</sup> God fulfilled His part of the call by persisting against Dow’s protest, and replying to Dow, “What God hath cleansed, call not thou common.” Dow had the expected qualms and doubts – “was this impression Satanic in origin? Am I equipped to serve the Lord in this way?” A physical decline in strength, similar to a consumption, followed by an approach to the Lord’s Table confirmed for Dow that he was truly called to preach the gospel. His doubts led only to dissatisfaction with life, and he could only be happy with the life of obedience to the Lord as a travelling preacher. Dow spent over a year analyzing his sense of “call” before finally having an opportunity to pray publically at the society meeting in October of 1794. He attempted an exhortation in November, resulting in a slight reproof from his parents. The next time he felt led to exhort he chickened out, resulting in a harsh self-chastening and the resolution to ignore the frowning faces of his parents and listeners. After some more months of torment a vision came to him offering divine protection if he would go and preach – “now or never.” Another year of his parents’ protests passed and

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<sup>35</sup> Dow, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Dow, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Moses, Peter & Paul figure prominently in the “call from God” genre of this period.



Dow had several visions, one of which convicted him with the words, “There is a dispensation of the gospel committed unto you, and wo unto you if you preach not the gospel.”<sup>38</sup>

Finally in January of 1796 Dow was invited to fill some appointments of C. Spry in Tolland, Connecticut. He then joined up with L. Macombs, a preacher on the New London circuit, who was not pleased with him. Dow took his brother-in-law’s horse to East Hartford to attend some meetings, then reconnected with Spry, who asked Dow to take three of his appointments. He met Nicholas Snethen, who counseled him to keep his own station – he felt Dow, at 18 years of age, was too concerned with his own importance, and besides, Dow was obviously too weak in body to itinerate.<sup>39</sup> Snethen predicted to Dow that he would not be received at the next conference.<sup>40</sup>

### **Call to Preach**

Dow despaired of his calling, but felt the weight of souls upon him, in spite of the unwillingness of others to confirm him as a travelling preacher. A vision of the late John Wesley repeating to him the woe that would be his if he preached not the gospel struck Dow with horror and amazement. Wesley the apparition accused him of fearing death and disobeying the Lord who had called him to preach. Dow’s uncle agreed to sell him a

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<sup>38</sup> Dow, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Throughout this paper, the word “itinerate” will refer to the practice of travelling from town to town to preach, usually by appointment. An “itinerant” is the travelling preacher assigned to keep these appointments. Itinerants were usually assigned a region or circuit, but for the most part, Dow made his own appointments. His preaching was not sanctioned by the officials of Methodism.

<sup>40</sup> Dow, 25.

horse, and to receive payment a year later.<sup>41</sup> Dow got four members of the society to cosign for his horse, and things seemed to be opening up for him.<sup>42</sup>

Dow preached from a text for the first time on Sunday, April 3, 1796, impressing some but drawing ire from others.<sup>43</sup> In July Jesse Lee, a prominent Methodist in New England at the time, wrote a letter recommending that Dow return home until he could receive a letter from his home society.<sup>44</sup> Dow took this dismissal hard, wet “two or three handkerchiefs with his tears” and begged him for further employment.<sup>45</sup> Lee relented and suggested Dow attend the Greenwich quarterly meeting that Sunday on the way home. He preached at Greenwich, then Smithfield and on to Providence. When he returned home he was mocked as one who began to build but could not finish, but apparently Dow had made a good impression on the road. Spry gave him a written license and ordered him to the quarterly meeting in Enfield, where he would receive a credential for the conference, and perhaps travel the Tolland circuit in Connecticut.<sup>46</sup> Because his hometown was on that circuit Dow chose not to accept that charge. He travelled to Hanover, NH to see his sister, and there met again with Jesse Lee, who rebuked him for insolence. Dow made his way to Enfield, fulfilling a few appointments on the way, but was denied his credential at Enfield. A certain Z.C. (Z. Cankey) convinced him that his

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<sup>41</sup> “Did You Know,” page 2, *Christian History*, (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1995). Four questions were asked concerning the candidate for circuit-riding ministry: 1. Is this man truly converted? 2. Does he know and keep our rules? 3. Can he preach acceptably? 4. Has he a horse?

<sup>42</sup> Dow, 26.

<sup>43</sup> Dow was 18 years old at this time.

<sup>44</sup> W.J. Townsend, D.D.; H.B. Workman, M.A., D.Lit.; George Eayrs, F.R.Hist.S., *A New History of Methodism*, 2 volumes, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), Vol. II, 104. Jesse Lee had long desired to “mission” New England, and began a circuit at Norwalk, Connecticut in 1789. Lee, a close acquaintance of Francis Asbury, served as elder of several circuits, and travelled extensively.

<sup>45</sup> Dow, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Dow, 29.

license to preach was just as good as a credential from the conference, which was obviously not true, but Dow presented himself before the bishop at the September 20 Conference in Thompson. Several protested against him and he was denied his credential, but Dow continued to travel, preaching in Rhode Island, New York and back to Adams, Massachusetts. He preached his way into the new state of Vermont and down the Connecticut River Valley to Northfield and Orange, MA, Petersham, NH, Fitchburg and Ashburnham, MA, and Rindge, NH. Now 19 years of age, Dow continued to preach from town to town in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In December he was in Brattleborough, VT where he contracted a severe cold in his lungs. Through deep snow he made his way to his sister's home in Vermont, and was offered to settle as stated preacher in a church nearby, but his compulsion to travel would not allow him to locate in that way.<sup>47</sup>

### **A Thorn in Dow's Side**

In June of 1797 his nemesis, Nicholas Snethen caught up with Dow and mentioned that Jesse Lee disapproved of his travelling to so many towns to preach. Dow was threatened with Lee's forbidding him to preach, but Lorenzo informed Snethen that he did not belong to Jesse Lee or any man, but his actions were between him and God, and the Methodists could only forbid him to preach in their own Connection.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Dow, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Dow, 32. Though Dow here acknowledges Methodist power over their own Connection, Dow regularly and deliberately preaches among the Methodists, as Paul started with Jews and ended up among Gentiles.

Dow preached constantly, at one time testifying that in 22 days he had travelled 350 miles and preached 26 times plus house-to-house visits and exhortations to hundreds in class meetings. Things came to a head at the Conference in Wilbraham, MA, on September 19, 1797. Many testified against him and few spoke up for him. His case was debated for three hours before the body finally rejected his credential. Dow did not find out the decision for some days, after meeting up with preachers returning to their homes from the Conference.<sup>49</sup>

Dow was faced with a dilemma – he planned to travel to a distant part of the new nation, establish some societies, gain a reputation, and return with these accomplishments in hopes of receiving his credential in this way, but Jesse Lee had already told him he would take out an advertisement denouncing him as an impostor in every newspaper on the continent. Around this time Dow lost his great coat, and his shoes were worn, so he threw out a fleece for the Lord – if someone would supply his needs, he would take that as a sign to continue travelling and preaching. Sure enough people of their own accord supplied his needs and gave him a few shillings for expenses.<sup>50</sup>

Dow then travelled north to Vermont where he received a letter demanding his return to a Quarterly meeting in Buckland. He did return, but too late for the meeting. His excuse was that he did not receive the message in time. He humbled himself before Brothers Macombs and Hutchinson, though not to the extent of claiming any guilt because of the lateness of his receiving the letter. Hutchinson softened toward him and took Lorenzo with him on his travels. Hutchinson seems to have had the notion that if

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<sup>49</sup> Dow, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Dow, 36.

Dow could travel for three months without dying this could be taken as a sign of God's favor. Dow left Hutchinson for upstate New York, determining to employ the tactic of visiting from house to house asking the people to join the society, hoping for a revival of interest in religion. He started in Pittstown, NY, with some success, though a few people began to call him crazy, and the devil seemed to him to have a foothold in the area.<sup>51</sup>

Against his own inhibitions he continued his practice of visiting every house in a village, convincing himself that if he did not do this, the souls of the residents would be required of him by God. He was certain God was about to revive religion in the region, so even if the older preachers would not visit house to house, he would. When he spoke to a resident he would invite that house to a meeting and many would come out to "hear a crazy man, as they thought, and were struck with a great solemnity, whilst I spoke."<sup>52</sup>

This took place before the great Cane Ridge Camp Meeting of 1801.<sup>53</sup> Dow would eventually begin to see the virtue of endorsing the Camp Meeting motif, and then join the "circuit" of men and women who would be featured speakers at such events, but already in 1798, during his first year or two of actual travelling, Dow had learned the usefulness of being considered "crazy." He tried this method at Wilson's Hollow – visiting every home and inviting each household to a meeting – and was able to visit 30 homes. When the attendees gathered for the meeting, Dow gave them a "Thus Saith the Lord" message, and invited them all back for two more nights. He returned some time later and at a meeting which he had pre-arranged, he proposed a covenant to the people,

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<sup>51</sup> Dow, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Dow, 38.

<sup>53</sup> For information on this pivotal event see almost any American church history, or Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1972).

“if they would attempt to pray three times a day, four weeks, on their knees, I would remember them thrice in the twenty-four hours during that space, God being our helper to perform” and he asked those interested to stand, signifying their desire for God to revive religion in the Hollow. About 20 stood. After Lorenzo left several youth gathered for mutual care of their souls, and including adults eight persons “found comfort.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Dow’s Method**

Early on Dow was becoming dependent on frequent meetings, corporate covenants to pray (“I caught them in a covenant”), and “revival style” preaching from the “thus saith the Lord” texts of the Bible. Critical to Dow’s success was the personal visitation of all the local homes, prior appointment to hold several meetings, and enough eccentricity to be considered “crazy” by some, but not enough to scare off the common folk. Dow employed these tactics throughout the circuit he created for himself, getting into as many “neighborhoods” as possible, visiting each home opened to him, and “sparing no character in my public declarations. Many were offended at my plainness, both of dress, expressions, and address in conversation about heart-religion, so that the country seemed to be in an uproar.”<sup>55</sup>

The incident at Poultney, VT, is typical – Dow entered a town void of “regular preaching,” and questioned a young woman there about her soul. Receiving “cool answers” Dow offered to pray that God would send a “fit of sickness” upon her to bring

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<sup>54</sup> Dow, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Dow, 38.

her to good. The woman did not appreciate this offer and soon the “whole family, except the father and one son, began to grow outrageous towards me, which occasioned me to go seven miles late at night, for the sake of family quietness.”<sup>56</sup> Perhaps he did this for his own safety as well. However, shortly after this the woman began to seek God, and, “with two of her sisters, was soon found walking in the ways of wisdom; and a society was shortly formed in the place, although I saw them no more.”<sup>57</sup>

Near the southern tip of Lake Champlain Lorenzo had an opportunity to trick a woman into praying for her soul, after she rebuked Dow for exhorting the wicked to pray. Such prayers were “an abomination to the Lord.” Dow bought a day of her time for a dollar, demanding that she spend that day in prayer and reading of Scripture. She too joined the ongoing revival in godly interests, and “felt the comforts of religion.”<sup>58</sup>

While on the road Lorenzo became seriously ill. His account lasts for several pages and includes tricking several people into giving him “just a cup of water” so he could accumulate 24 cups in the hope of “sweating out” the illness. Then he persuaded certain friends to carry him about from town to town, on a homemade bier, in a coach, and by horse. He debated with home owners, Baptists, and lost souls throughout this sickness. Word got out that he was dead, then alive again, then again dead; his family heard and dressed in black. While at a home in which a young people’s prayer meeting was being held in an adjoining room, Lorenzo debated with himself: Is God able to heal me? Willing? Do I lack faith? Is faith the gift of God or is it the “creature’s act?” He concluded, “The power to believe is the gift of God; but the act of faith is the

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<sup>56</sup> Dow, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Dow, 39. How Dow learned of this result is unknown.

<sup>58</sup> Dow, 39.

creature's.”<sup>59</sup> He asked the youth to pray for his recovery; in two hours he fell asleep, within 15 hours began to mend, and after ten weeks was able to ride again. A Miracle!<sup>60</sup>

During this illness Dow questioned his decision to face hardships on the road, but concluded that the peace and consolation it brought caused his soul to be lifted up above the fear of death, and made the grave appear lovely. He resolved: “First, to attain to higher degrees of holiness here, that I might be happier hereafter; and, secondly, I felt the worth of souls to lie near my heart, and I desired to be useful to them. What I desired to die for was, to get out of this troublesome world, and to be at rest with saints above.”<sup>61</sup>

### **In Need of Change**

On January 1, 1799 Dow left the Troy, NY/Lake Champlain region and supplied someone else's place on the Pittsfield, MA Circuit. Over the next several weeks he preached in Stockbridge, Lenox, Pittsfield, Windsor, Adams, Stanford, Clarsburgh, Pownal, Hoosac, New Concord, and other New England towns familiar to us today. He continued to witness to the effects of the spreading revival, and told several stories of men and women coming to repentance. For example, at a “gingerbread lottery” he preached to the young people, leaving them “so struck, that the fiddler whom they employed had nothing to do.”<sup>62</sup> His reputation for being “crazy” brought many out to hear him. In Alford he preached Methodism, “inside and outside.” In Stockbridge, Lenox, and several times in Pittsfield, Dow encountered the opposition of the church leaders, but

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<sup>59</sup> This statement summarizes American Arminian theology.

<sup>60</sup> Dow, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Dow, 45.

<sup>62</sup> Dow, 48.



started to see his popularity grow. As Conference drew near, while in Bethlehem, Dow was seized with “puking” and found himself growing weaker each day. He decided that a long voyage to Ireland would get him over this sickness, and perhaps deliver him from an uncomfortable interview. While Conference was being held, Dow returned to Albany and other New York circuit churches, bidding them all farewell until meeting in the future world, having received the nod from several that his “skirts were pure from all their blood,” as he had spared no pains to bring them to good.<sup>63</sup>

Lorenzo Dow at this time was still deeply mired in doubt. He had no official credential, other than a notation from a friend to be allowed to “fill in” for him. Dow had no assurance that he would even be alive for much longer – his dream of the prophet Nathan declared he would die in his twenty-second year. Those who heard him were not singing his praises (not yet, anyway). He had no provision or horse for a journey, and he was unwilling to take a circuit that included his hometown, or required running into anyone who knew him. He was, of all men, most to be pitied. What he had was a series of dreams and visions that required him to go into all the world preaching the gospel, and a new Methodist doctrine that any person could be saved by asking God for salvation. He was learning to manipulate his presence so that he would not receive rejection “to his face,” and he could use the excuse of not learning of the decisions of the Quarterly Conference until it was too late. He was devoted to Methodist doctrine, but not to Methodist government. His devotion was to his hearers.

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<sup>63</sup> Dow, 50.

## CHAPTER 2

### HARNESSING PERSONAL DRIVE: RACING THROUGH THE 22<sup>nd</sup> YEAR

#### **Fresh Sea Breeze**

By July of 1799 Dow was back in his home town, still suffering from his asthmatic disorder. He decided to travel to the ocean to see if salt water would cure him. Of course, “to the ocean” became “across the ocean.” On the way he preached in towns not assigned to him, taking advantage of his decline in health to persuade others to repent. Even in his diseased state, and pining for Ireland he took off on a trip that had him crossing the Canadian border, preaching in every town, selling his watch and portmanteau to buy a horse, suffering from weakness and deprivation, and still longing for the open ocean. He made his way back through New England, then into New Jersey and back up to New Hampshire, hearing nothing but discouragement when he revealed his oceanic visions to other preachers along the way. In the back of Lorenzo’s mind is the prophet Nathan warning of death in his twenty-second year. During these days he went farther north, then farther south than he was accustomed. Was he stalling? Was the ocean the answer to his anxiety? Then he took the plunge.

In spite of grave danger, Dow made his way to Montreal where he found a ship belonging to Quebec, heading for Dublin.<sup>1</sup> It was October, 1799, when Dow boarded the ship. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Dow remembered the prophetic dream wherein his

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<sup>1</sup> The French Revolution was in full swing at this time, and French Montreal was experiencing unrest. The Canadians of British and French ancestry were at odds, in these days building up to yet another confrontation – the Napoleonic Wars.

death was predicted during his twenty-second year. After an altercation with a bounty hunter who charged him with being a spy, and after avoiding a press gang, Dow made it to Quebec, and on November 2<sup>nd</sup> his ship set off for Dublin. Of course there was a rising of the sea that the captain had not seen the likes of before, and the gusts separated the ships in the flotilla one from another, but they came together again and Dow came as a stranger to a strange land.<sup>2</sup> By the end of November Dow was on shore at Larne in the north of Ireland.<sup>3</sup> After inquiring about the presence of Methodists he was led to a man whose wife “makes more ado about religion, than all the people in town,” and Dow landed among a group of nine who had just been made a society (a new church plant).

In Larne, Dow began preaching, and also experienced a physical recovery from his long illness. The connection between preaching, Ireland, and recuperation was not lost on Dow. The Lord was blessing his decision to make the ultimate journey to carry the Gospel to the Irish, who, he felt, were all living in darkness. In Dublin Lorenzo inquired for Methodists and was taken to the home of William Thomas.<sup>4</sup> Dow found a Mr. Tobias to whom he made his case for preaching the Gospel, and Tobias advised him to return to America and offered him a gold crown to help pay for the trip. Of course Dow refused and went elsewhere for opportunities to preach. Fortunately Dow had another dream that confirmed him in his ambition to travel throughout Ireland preaching. He found an opening in the soldiers’ barracks at Chapel-izod and Island Bridge. From

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<sup>2</sup> The trial at sea motif is common in these dangerous years, and is part of the “testimony” of Wesley himself.

<sup>3</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite, or The Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow*, (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Dow considered all of Ireland to be in darkness, yet he looked for Methodists in the towns he enters. He was in Ireland to banish the darkness of papism, but he was dependent upon Wesley’s followers for both relief and for nurturing of his converts and/or listeners.

there he took a canal boat to the more interior parts of the country, walking about somewhat freely even though Ireland was under martial law at the time.<sup>5</sup>

Dow again wondered if he made the right choice in sailing away from America. Another dream came to him in which he saw himself in a coffin. A voice told him that this would have been his fate – as the prophet predicted concerning his sure death in his twenty-second year – had he remained in America, so he was justified in sailing to Ireland. By travelling to the full extent of his imagination he had saved himself for further usefulness. He woke with all questions and worries gone.<sup>6</sup>

We may chuckle or even guffaw at such a dependence on dreams, but we who have purged our lives from all traces of supernatural influence still experience indecision and anxiety. High School seniors wring their hands over which college to attend, and sleep is lost over vocational choice and just the right marriage partner. Whole episodes of situational comedies are devoted to the angst of having been the first person within a relationship to have said, “I love you.” When the Lord answers through a dream or a string of coincidences the disciple of the Lord moves forward boldly. After his “deliverance” from death during his twenty-second year, Lorenzo Dow never again doubted that he was doing the Lord’s will, and he never looked backed, but continued his travelling and preaching.

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<sup>5</sup> Dow, 63. Tension is high between Protestant Northern Ireland and the rest of the island (Roman Catholic). British anxiety over France had everyone on edge, and several wondered if Dow were a spy.

<sup>6</sup> Dow, 62.

## **I Was a Stranger**

From December of 1799 through July of 1800 Dow travelled around Ireland, centering his labors in the Larne area. This time included an aborted attempt to sail to the main Island (the wind drove the ship back to Ireland), and an offer from Dr. Coke to serve as a missionary in Halifax or Quebec for six years, which Dow declined. Not long after this Dow came down with a serious bout of smallpox which confined him for some time. It was during this illness that he met Dr. Johnson, who would become a life-long friend and travelling companion whenever Dow was in the British Isles. It was also during his stay in Ireland and while confined on his sickbed that Dow worked out many of his personal theological questions.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, confinement to his sickbed brought to Lorenzo's mind whisperings that God wanted him to travel to other countries to preach His Gospel. Dr. Johnson cared for Dow for seven weeks, as the Quakers and Methodists in the area grew in their fondness for the American evangelist. As Dow recovered he sought to preach at Whitefriar-street preaching-house and at Lady Huntingdon's society meeting-house in Plunket-street, but was denied.<sup>8</sup> He did find an opening at the Weaver's Hall on the Coombe, which was occupied by the Separate Methodists, where Dow spoke what he felt.<sup>9</sup> His 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday (October 16, 1800) came and went and Dow continued to preach in prisons and Chapel-

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<sup>7</sup> Dow, 62-74.

<sup>8</sup> Lady Selena, Countess of Huntingdon welcomed several Methodists – Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and John Fletcher among them – to meet on her estate for mutual spiritual enrichment and to plan the advance of the church to other parts of the kingdom. By the time of Lorenzo Dow the Wesleyan Methodists and what became known as the Calvinistic Methodists had separated, and both groups were attempting to build chapels and societies in various towns.

<sup>9</sup> The Kilhamites, or New Connection Methodists followed Alexander Kilham, who separated from John Wesley in an effort to promote a more 'primitive' form of Methodism. They would have been more sympathetic toward Dow than the Wesleyan Methodists.

izod.<sup>10</sup> He also travelled extensively, handing out pamphlets, having a run-in with Matthew Lanktree,<sup>11</sup> and appearing before Magistrates to justify his presence as a North American in Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Dow cemented his relationship with Dr. Paul Johnson and his wife Letitia, with whom he had spent so many months, then said good-bye on February 1, 1801, and travelled even more extensively throughout Ireland. After a quick return to the Johnson home Dow embarked on the *Venus* with 72 other passengers (mostly Roman Catholics) for America on April 3, 1801.<sup>13</sup>

### **Back Home?**

By June 16<sup>th</sup> Dow was before the Conference justifying his trip to Europe by pointing to his improved health. Bishop Whatcoat (one of Wesley's early appointees to America) and a man named Kirk fought over rights to print a pamphlet of Dow's experiences in Ireland and on the ocean, but with no income promised to him directly, Dow was forced to take a circuit for a year.<sup>14</sup> His status in the Conference was still "trial

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<sup>10</sup> The significance of this birthday was that Dow experienced a dream in which he was informed that he would die in his 22<sup>nd</sup> year. Fortunately this fate was rescinded when Dow proved himself obedient to the Lord by his faithfulness as a travelling preacher of the gospel, and especially by travelling to Ireland.

<sup>11</sup> See Dow, 76-77. Lanktree was put off by Dow's seeming arrogance at Conference, but to his credit he observed Dow in action and agreed that the Spirit had his hand on Dow. See two letters of recommendation from Lanktree at Dow, 416-417.

<sup>12</sup> Dow was stepping on political toes. At this time France was still at war with England, and was regrouping from a great anti-monarchical revolution, and gearing up for Napoleon's continental outrages. Americans were remembered in the United Kingdom as having welcomed the French as allies in their own revolution, and in fact had sent several war celebrities to France at various times (Ben Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson) as favorable diplomats.

<sup>13</sup> Dow, 75-87.

<sup>14</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition, complete and unabridged, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979). In Volume IV, Journals, Wesley notes on page 288 that he appointed Mr. (Richard) Whatcoat and Mr. (Thomas)Vasey to serve the "lost sheep" of America on Wednesday, September 1, 1784. The next day he appointed three more (Asbury, Pilmore and Coke?). In a "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America" (Volume XIII, 251-252) Wesley notes that he appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be "joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard

basis” but he was found not guilty of breaking Discipline by sailing to Europe. He was placed on the Dutchess and Columbia circuit, with David Brown and William Thatcher, and Freeborn Garretson as the presiding elder.<sup>15</sup> Dow made his way to Rhinebeck, crossed the Hudson into Kingston, came back to Poughkeepsie, entered Massachusetts, and returned to Rhinebeck, preaching all the way.<sup>16</sup> Then he must have left the circuit for we find him first at his parents’ home in Coventry, then travelling through south-central Connecticut. He gave his circuit another try, then after the quarterly meeting in October he left the Dutchess/Columbia circuit for the Litchfield circuit, though feeling the stress of depression the whole time. One senses he is about to make a major change.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Open Road**

His declining health was a sign to him that God intended for him to travel more at large – “the only remedy to escape and recover from this decline, would be by a change of air and climate.”<sup>18</sup> Dow wondered if it would be prudent to leave the assigned circuit, but he found Bermuda or Georgia appealing for a change in climate. He presented his surmisings at the Cornwall quarterly meeting in November, and without full consent declared his intention to travel more broadly. In December of 1801 he made his way to

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Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them...” In this letter he justified the appointment of “Superintendents” (Bishops) and “Elders” based on his reading of Lord King’s *Account of the Primitive Church*, which convinced him “years ago” that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order.

<sup>15</sup> As can be seen by the towns Dow visits, the Dutchess/Columbia circuit included what became Dutchess and Columbia Counties in New York before the Southern end of Dutchess County was cut off to make Putnam County – all the area north of Westchester County (Yonkers) north of today’s Manhattan, up to Albany, between Connecticut/Massachusetts and the Hudson River.

<sup>16</sup> Dow, 87-89.

<sup>17</sup> Dow, 89-90.

<sup>18</sup> Dow, 90.

New Haven, sailed for New York, then in January of 1802 was far south of all his problems. Even his cough left him. He arrived in Georgia looking forward to seeing the one person he knew – Hope Hull.<sup>19</sup> Dow made his way from Savannah to Augusta, preaching along the way, and receiving support from those to whom he spoke.

In February of 1802 he arrived at Hope Hull's home, but was coolly received. He desired to preach in the town, but Hull made it clear he would only reluctantly appoint for Dow to speak at the courthouse. While Hull took the road, Lorenzo ran through the woods, arrived in town ahead of Hope Hull, and distributed handbills among the townsfolk, then cleared out before Hull arrived. This created a "great hubbub among the people" so a large crowd was available when Dow came to preach. Hull beseeched Lorenzo to return to the North and settle into a circuit there.<sup>20</sup>

Lorenzo being Lorenzo, the thought of returning was instantly dismissed, and Dow travelled about the many towns of Georgia, meeting with African Americans, Baptists, poor and wealthy alike. Most of his travel was by foot so he did not bypass a single town or village. On one of the roads he overheard people talk of attending a meeting. He followed these Presbyterians to their meeting-house, where he distributed handbills and "talked himself up." The people agreed to hear him on the stipulation that Dow quit when the regular minister arrived. At a Methodist meeting-house a preacher who had heard Dow before invited him into his pulpit. Here Dow was able to make the acquaintance of Stith Mead, the elder of the circuit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dow, 92.

<sup>20</sup> Dow, 96.

<sup>21</sup> The Elder resembles a bishop or District Superintendent, heading a regional circuit of churches. Stith Mead became a rare supporter of Dow.



Mead invited Dow to preach, which he did that afternoon and again that evening and the next. When Dow appointed for a Tuesday night meeting he was told that Nicholas Snethen was well-liked but did not gather much of a crowd on a weeknight. Possibly this was the beginning of Snethen's anti-Lorenzo campaign. Dow promised to give away hymnbooks to the young people, so a large crowd appeared on Tuesday evening. Dow proposed a covenant to the people to meet in prayer daily in private devotion. Hundreds agreed. Dow had them rise and bound them by their honor to keep the covenant. As Dow tells the story, Snethen was resentful of the crowd Lorenzo attracted.<sup>22</sup>

Lorenzo travelled extensively in Georgia and the Carolinas, making hundreds of friends and a few enemies. By 8 April, 1802 he landed in New York. Throughout Dow's Journal we find him presenting himself as a lover of humanity, not at all biased against African Americans, slaves or poor individuals. On 13 May, 1802, Dow arrived in Middletown, CT expecting a cold reception, but was well-received. Apparently he found minutes from a meeting of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist preachers convened to form regulations to help their societies act more cordially toward one another. The contentions between the different sects had caused great injury to the cause of the church in the unbelieving world. Lorenzo paid for, printed off and distributed hundreds of these minutes. In the middle of the night Dow pasted three copies of this reprint on the doors of the meeting houses in Middletown. The next morning the members of the different

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<sup>22</sup> Dow, 100. Nicholas Snethen wrote a strong letter against Dow to "brothers" in England. This letter caused Lorenzo no end of trouble. Almost every town was prejudiced against Dow because of this negative letter – even people who had not read the letter heard about it and made Lorenzo's second trip across the ocean very difficult and even dangerous (possible arrest for being a spy).

churches were impressed by this effort to unify the churches of the town. Thereafter Dow had “the liberty of the [Methodist] pulpit” in Middletown.<sup>23</sup>

### **Unity of the Brethren**

For the rest of this year and into the next (1802-1803) Lorenzo seemed to dwell on love between believers, and love for the unbeliever. He equated this with the blessing of sanctification, and the source of “peace of mind.”<sup>24</sup> Sadly Dow was shut out of some churches, and even expelled from the Methodist Connection, though, as he points out, he was never really “in” the Connection in the first place.<sup>25</sup> While he was in Europe a catch-22 type situation developed – the Discipline was amended to include a clause to the effect that every local preacher (the category of Dow’s license) was to meet regularly in a class.<sup>26</sup> Of course, Dow was not a local preacher, he was acting the part of a travelling preacher, and was not able to regularly attend a class, or at least not the same class. As a result of this breach Dow lost his license.<sup>27</sup> Dow was able to enjoy the friendship of several private persons within and outside the Connection, but the powers that be washed their hands of previous accidental acceptance of Lorenzo Dow as a Local Preacher who moved about at will.

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<sup>23</sup> Dow, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Dow, 106. John Wesley himself claimed that the blessing of Entire Sanctification was nothing less than “perfect love” – “The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.” See John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Dow, 107.

<sup>26</sup> As the name implies, a Local Preacher is to remain local – he is not to travel. The presiding elder of a circuit would have oversight of an inexperienced Local Preacher. Travelling was for the tried and true preachers who had less direct supervision – they answered to the Conference. Dow broke the terms of his license and insisted on itinerating at will. He would NOT settle in one place.

<sup>27</sup> Dow, 110.

## Alone Again

Loss of license did not hinder Lorenzo from preaching in so many of the same towns where he had his start – throughout New York east as well as west of the Hudson, and throughout New England. At a gathering of the big three churches where Lorenzo spoke, the audience had been awed earlier by a great hail storm. During the meeting a large meteor fell, causing many who saw it to fall over in a faint. Lorenzo had the sense to stress our human need to fly to the Lord for shelter, and a great harvest was made for the Kingdom of God. The attendees supplied Dow with a horse, saddle, and travelling funds, and he made his way to the town of Western, NY with Brother Miller, who had adopted his wife's younger sister, Peggy, the woman who would become Dow's wife.<sup>28</sup> Before that became a possibility, though, Lorenzo made a journey through Canada and then back to Georgia.

Dow made his way to Georgia by land this time – he travelled widely preaching in several towns, until he came to Shoulder-Bone Creek where a camp-meeting was held – the first for Dow – and Lorenzo spoke several times. Another camp-meeting was held from 25-29 March 1803, at Jones' Meeting House. The camp meeting movement spread across the South especially after the famous Cane Ridge Camp Meeting in Kentucky in August of 1801. While "protracted meetings" of a sort had been held before this, and religious "fairs" that had their start in Scotland made their way to North America in the Colonial period, the camp meeting was a truly American phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> At first

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<sup>28</sup> This home town of Smith Miller and Dow's first wife, Peggy, is referred to as both Western and Weston.

<sup>29</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Communion services held over four days in Scotland spread to North America in the Colonial era, and were modified into a Revivalistic-style preaching and praying meeting held over an unspecified number of days, employing several preachers. These chaotic

preaching was provided by several visiting preachers and laymen with experience. Word of the effectiveness of these meeting made its way to Central England, where godly laymen longed for a whole day spent in prayer. Lorenzo experienced firsthand the power of these meetings, and printed pamphlets extolling the virtues of camp meetings.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps because of the camp meeting movement, Lorenzo left Georgia for Tennessee and Kentucky in the middle of 1803. He had a couple of encounters with Native Americans – those who came to his service and quietly listened to the preaching, and those who invaded his camp and threatened Dow with death; but of course, Lorenzo “felt the power of faith to put [his] confidence in God” and made his escape.<sup>31</sup>

From Kentucky Dow made his way through Virginia and then back to Georgia near the close of 1803. His needs were met by Major John Oliver, who was touched by his preaching the last time he was in Georgia. It was around this time that Lorenzo developed his obsession with preaching down “A-double-L-Partism.”<sup>32</sup> The occasion was

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gatherings were formalized into structured, pre-planned camps with morning, afternoon and evening preaching and organized times of “repentance” or “rededication.”

<sup>30</sup> Several books have been released describing the Camp Meeting movement, or offering histories of “Camps.” The histories of several are told on various websites, including [mariettacampmeeting.org](http://mariettacampmeeting.org); [oceangrove.org](http://oceangrove.org); [salemcampmeeting.org](http://salemcampmeeting.org); and [felderscampmeeting.com](http://felderscampmeeting.com). Beginning in 1819 and accelerating through the 1830’s, Camp Meeting sites formalized into campgrounds or even Conference Centers. Campgrounds were divided into sites for families to erect their tents. Ocean Park in Maine, and several other campgrounds got their start by holding annual camp meetings. In the south many camp meetings are still held annually, but most were absorbed by the Christian vacationers and turned into money-making ventures or non-profits that depended on year-round programming to maintain themselves. Most of the camp meetings that still exist were of Arminian or Methodist heritage, though Presbyterians and other Calvinists also got in on the ground floor of the vacation/retreat trend.

<sup>31</sup> Dow, 121.

<sup>32</sup> “A-double-L-partism” may be Lorenzo’s creation. I have never seen the phrase anywhere else. The idea is that God calls “ALL” to Himself, not just a Part of humanity. Lorenzo believed that the preaching of election limited God, who calls all men to repent, and is not willing that any should perish. While Lorenzo Dow was untrained as a theologian, his appeal to ALL was popular – no one likes to think of himself as not elect unto salvation. However, as one would expect, Dow’s treatise on “A-double-L-partism” is guilty of the “more heat than light” charge. Of course, if one were not “elect unto salvation” would one care one way or another?

a man who heard the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation “preached up”, and, in despair at thinking himself elect to reprobation “[blew] out his brains.”<sup>33</sup> This tragedy was related to Dow by General Stewart. Dow did not witness this event first-hand, but he was stirred up enough to begin a campaign of preaching against “A-double-L-Partism” in his meetings or camp-meetings throughout Georgia, and for the rest of his effective ministry.

While travelling from Georgia through the Carolinas in early 1804, Dow decided to make a string of appointments that would have him end up in Knoxville, TN. In August of 1803 an outbreak of “The Jerks” took place there, and Dow wanted to check it out. He came, he saw, he moved on. But amazingly cases of the “Jerks” began to pop up in many of the next towns in which he preached – 30 in Seversville; 50 in Marysville. When Dow returned to Knoxville to preach, 150 there had “Jerks,” or what Dow called “the jerking exercise.”<sup>34</sup> And the individuals most affected were those who had first opposed the notion of involuntary jerking.<sup>35</sup> Dow was able to discuss this phenomenon with a group of Quakers 18 miles from Knoxville. They explained that Quakers do not suffer from the jerks because they strive to be still, and other churchgoers attempt to suppress the jerks while remaining in an otherwise agitated state, so the jerking motion takes over them. Of course, Dow mentioned that about a dozen of the still Quakers were affected with the jerks within moments of denying that Quakers would suffer from them.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Dow, 127.

<sup>34</sup> Barton W. Stone, “Piercing Screams and Heavenly Smiles: An Eyewitness Account of Signs and Wonders at Early Camp Meetings,” *Christian History*, Issue 45.

<sup>35</sup> Dow, 132-135.

<sup>36</sup> Dow, 134.

Lorenzo mentioned that the jerking exercise is an equal opportunity manifestation:

“I have seen Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Independents, exercised with the jerks – gentleman and lady, black and white, the aged and the youth, rich and poor, without exception, from which I infer, as it cannot be accounted for on natural principles, and carries such marks of involuntary motion, that it is no trifling matter.”<sup>37</sup>

Dow claimed that the most pious and the most philosophical naturalist is not troubled by jerks, but the “lukewarm, lazy, half-hearted, indolent professor” will get the jerks. At a camp meeting Dow noticed that the saplings were not removed and the ground was not cleared. His guide mentioned that the trees were left at a certain height for “the people to jerk by.” Dow also noted that individuals were not harmed by experiencing the jerks, unless they tried to resist them.<sup>38</sup> Those who mocked others who had the jerks soon received the jerks themselves. No one observing the jerks in others could account for this experience on natural principles. Fifty people convulsing violently during a religious meeting – that is hard to ignore; but such is life on the road with Crazy Lorenzo Dow.

Lorenzo began the next chapter of his journal with a trip through Virginia, including tales of a woman with the jerks and an A-double-L-part man, who was shaken by Dow’s discourse. Before we know it he was in New London, CT, with papa and mamma Hobson and Stith Mead. Back among friends Dow attended a camp meeting with about fifteen hundred people on the second day of the event – a large number for a camp meeting – but only one person found peace in the afternoon and another in the evening –

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<sup>37</sup> Dow, 134.

<sup>38</sup> Dow, 135.

a small number for such a large event.<sup>39</sup> Dow claimed that by day three there were 3,000 in attendance, and before long there were general shouts from the old saints and young converts, and cries for mercy from the distressed. After the camp meeting disbanded, as Lorenzo recalled, 50 found the pardoning love of God and spread out over the country. Lorenzo added to his journal a couple letters from friends testifying to Dow's participation in this great outreach – several found the pearl of great price and about 40 joined the local church.<sup>40</sup> Seems like sparse fruit for a meeting of 3,000.

While in Virginia he participated in several camp meetings. As his journal is written it appears as though he was the sole preacher, but that was not how these meetings operated. Dow testified not only to the number of people who were saved, but it seems he is more delighted by the number who joined the church, particularly the Methodist Church. He wanted to be perceived as a co-worker with other Methodists in the work of the Gospel.<sup>41</sup>

At this time a significant development took place with regard to the publication of Lorenzo's *Chain*: what will be done with the profits? Lorenzo donated the profits (about \$500) toward the building of a church in Lynchburg, VA, in hopes of silencing those who were starting to notice that there was a great deal of money attached to preaching and publishing. Later he announced the publication of his journals and the promise to apply the profits toward the building of a meeting-house in Washington, the new capital, on ground donated by a local gentleman. This chapel would be given to the Methodists.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dow, 135-136.

<sup>40</sup> Dow, 138.

<sup>41</sup> Dow, 139.

<sup>42</sup> Dow, 142-143.

After preaching at several camp meetings in Virginia, by 29 April 1804, Lorenzo was feeling that his “work in this country is drawing to a close, and my heart drawn towards England.”<sup>43</sup> He returned to New England and by July was at his father’s house, where he planned camp meetings, and then traveled to Boston, where he spoke several times. He is then led to Connecticut and Albany, NY. He noted briefly a trip to Weston,<sup>44</sup> NY, where he met with Smith Miller, his wife Hannah, and Hannah’s younger sister, Peggy, whom he had not seen for two years.<sup>45</sup> When Dow entered the region, Smith Miller attached himself to Dow, who ended up in the Miller home, where he again met with Peggy.<sup>46</sup> She was presented to Lorenzo as someone who was only interested in marrying a preacher.<sup>47</sup> Dow spent the night in the Miller home, and all night not a word passed between Lorenzo and Peggy. The next morning Dow asked Peggy, “Do you think you could accept of such an object as me?” Peggy left the room without answering.

A few days later Dow was able to point out to Peggy the likelihood that he would be soon dead due to the danger of going from warm to cold climates and back again. He left her with these words:

But if I am preserved about a year and a half from now, I am in hopes of seeing this northern country again, and if during this time you live and remain single, and find no one that you like better than you do me, and would be willing to give me up twelve months out of thirteen, or three years out of four, to travel, and that in foreign lands, and never say, ‘do not go to your appointment, &c.’ – for if you should stand in my way, I should pray to God to remove you, which I believe he

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<sup>43</sup> Dow, 143.

<sup>44</sup> Dow switches spellings for this hometown of Peggy Miller, his first wife. Sometimes he uses “Western” and here he uses “Weston.” This is confusing, since “western” could also refer to the westernmost parts of the state of New York. Today there is both a Weston, and a Western, New York, and both are small towns, but far apart from each other.

<sup>45</sup> Dow, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Peggy is Smith Miller’s wife’s younger sister, but because Miller seems to have adopted Peggy she uses Miller as her last name. Smith Miller takes responsibility for marrying her to Dow.

<sup>47</sup> Dow, 152.



would answer, - and if I find no one that I like better than I do you, perhaps something further may be said on the subject.<sup>48</sup>

This is the extent of Lorenzo's romance. In the meantime Dow travelled for some weeks, and even considered getting married after his return from Europe, while he made his way to Natchez country in the region of Mississippi Territory in the days near the time of the Louisiana Purchase, where "religion was low" but the land attractive.<sup>49</sup> Dow considered that Smith Miller and his small family should move to this area, though two thousand miles away from Western, NY. He would come to regret this idea. Dow maintained his correspondence with the Miller family; he learned that Peggy was still single, and due to his concern that his letters to her would be intercepted and his reputation tarnished, he decided to be married to Peggy on 3 September, 1804. Not surprisingly Dow and his new brother-in-law left again for the south the next day (sans Peggy, or Hannah for that matter). On the way Dow stopped in Steubenville, Ohio, checking off the last of the 17 states of the Union where he travelled and preached.<sup>50</sup>

### **A Suitable Helper**

On 4 December, 1804, Dow and his brother-in-law Smith Miller left the southern Mississippi settlements and headed north. On his way he witnessed severe treatment of African Americans and Native Americans which led him to question the humanity of

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<sup>48</sup> The subject he is referring to is marriage. Dow, 152.

<sup>49</sup> Natchez was established in the 1700's by the French, on the east bank of the Mississippi River in what became Mississippi Territory, and then the State of Mississippi. The town occupies a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, but Dow seems to use "Natchez" to refer to the greater region on both sides of the Mississippi, and not just the town of Natchez.

<sup>50</sup> Dow, 154.

even godly people. After touring Virginia and Kentucky, Dow was back in Western, NY to see Peggy on 22 April, 1805. Apparently Smith and Hannah Miller began making plans to move to Mississippi Territory, now that Peggy was given over to her husband's care. Lorenzo promptly left Peggy at a camp and left on a tour of New England. By July 3<sup>rd</sup> he was back in the Western region and saw Peggy. By July 14<sup>th</sup> Smith and Hannah Miller were bidding their friends goodbye – Mississippi Territory or bust – and Lorenzo and Peggy were preparing for their next tour. At Albany Lorenzo preached in the meeting-house of brother Vanderlip, from which place Dow “shipped Peggy down the Hudson River for New York,” while he set off by land.<sup>51</sup>

Lorenzo toured New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, preaching at several camp meetings. In September he noted spending time with momma and papa Hobson, and a supporter, Stith Mead, who carried Dow in his carriage. They were at the New Kent camp-meeting when “a clump of wood” was flung toward Dow while he was speaking. Dow pursued the fleeing perpetrator, crying “Run, run, Old Sam is after you.”<sup>52</sup> The next day Dow carved “Old Sam” on the wood and nailed it to a tree, calling it “Old Sam’s Monument.” When locals hired a young man to pull down Dow’s monument he had “inward workings of his mind” and refused to tamper with the sign. Those who considered removing Dow’s monument all suffered tragic disasters – according to Dow’s Journal.

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<sup>51</sup> Dow, 171.

<sup>52</sup> Dow, 177. “Old Sam” was a euphemism for Satan.

## **Return to England**

Lorenzo was now ready to sail for England, but not before receiving certified letters of recommendation from the Governor of Virginia, and, with the seal of the United States, a letter from Secretary of State James Madison. Dow took these, with letters from the Town Clerk, Magistrates, County Clerk, Judges, and Governor of Connecticut, containing an account of his parentage, to a Notary Public, along with two material witnesses: James Quackenbush and Nicholas Snethen.<sup>53</sup> On Sunday, 10 November 1805, Lorenzo and Peggy sailed for England (after hiring a boat for 10 shillings to carry him to the ship which had already left the harbor before he was on board).<sup>54</sup>

Dow claimed this was an easy voyage, yet he worried about his meeting with Dr. Coke, the Methodist bishop returned from America to England. When Dow compiled his journal he included a note that Nicholas Snethen spoke against him three times on the very day Dow had him appear before the Notary as a character witness.<sup>55</sup>

Dow mentioned that at this time there were three Methodist connections, besides the new connection raised by Alexander Kilham (The Kilhamites): the English, Irish, and American Episcopal.<sup>56</sup> He had travelled among the American and Irish Methodists, but not yet among the English. He would soon discover how scrupulous the English were. As

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<sup>53</sup> Snethen and Quackenbush turned out to be poor choices as character references. Snethen wrote letters to the Methodists in England warning them of Dow's unfitness as a preacher of the gospel. Snethen continued to be an annoyance to Dow both in England and in North America. James Quackenbush stole money Dow sent as payment on his brother-in-law's property (book subscriptions), resulting in Dow's lawsuit and some loss of reputation.

<sup>54</sup> Dow, 180.

<sup>55</sup> Dow, 180.

<sup>56</sup> The Methodist Episcopal Church. Francis Asbury was instrumental in the establishment and even the naming of this body. Wesley appointed Asbury as a superintendent, but the American Methodists and even Wesley himself felt Asbury went beyond his authorization in declaring the church to be episcopal at the Christmas Conference in 1784, and declaring himself to be, for all intents and purposes, the American Pope.

his ship was entering the river port off Ireland a mail packet came alongside the vessel. Dow heard about the victory of Nelson over the French and Spaniards off Cape Trafalgar, and of the defeat of the Austrians.<sup>57</sup> He wrote to Dr. Johnson to inform him of their arrival. He and Peggy had difficulty finding a place to lodge; many of his former friends proved disinterested in providing a place to stay. He was able to preach here and there among those who had not heard of him, or those who were curious to see “the American,” and even approached Jabez Bunting, who refused to see him.<sup>58</sup> Dow ran into trouble when applying for a license to preach, as he felt unable to take the oath of allegiance, but he did have some contact with what he calls “Quaker Methodists.” In London he was treated cordially by Adam Clarke (a protégé of John Wesley, now in 1806 a key leader of the Methodist Church, its leading theologian and commentator) who directed him to the room where Dr. Coke was preaching that evening.<sup>59</sup> Dow was able to go about preaching among Methodists, Quaker Methodists, and Free-Gospellers, making his way from London to Liverpool. He crossed over to Dublin, looked up Dr. Paul

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<sup>57</sup> The victory of Nelson and the British Navy over the combined forces of the French and Spanish Navies on 21 October 1805, known as Trafalgar, off the cape of the same name on the southwestern coast of Spain, is an item of history, but interestingly Henry Kissinger in his book, *Diplomacy*, points out that the British at this time were “internally serene in politics” and strongly in favor of the status quo abroad, but especially at home. (Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, 92-96). The ramifications for Dow would be that he faced a greater threat of arrest for treasonous activity than at any other time in his ministry. The crown considered outdoor meetings and preaching, especially when it involved the slightest hint of pro-democracy, an act of treason against the monarchy. The Riot Act was often read for John Wesley, and perhaps even for Dow 50 years later. To assemble common people was seen as an act of defiance against the monarch.

<sup>58</sup> W. J. Townsend, Workman, H.B. and Eayrs, George, *A New History of Methodism*, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909) Volume I, 405. Dr. Jabez Bunting figured prominently in the history of the Methodist Church in England after the death of John Wesley. He was one of the original “100” chosen by Wesley to inherit the Methodist Church. He served as secretary of the Missionary Society, joined the Anti-slavery movement, and edited several periodicals, including *The Christian Advocate*. He interacted with the Kilhamites, and his participation with the “Leeds Organ Case” suggests an acquaintance with the founders of Primitive Methodism in that region of England.

<sup>59</sup> Dow, 187. Note the six volume *Commentary on the Bible* by Adam Clarke (Nashville: Abingdon Press), as well as his *Christian Theology* (with a Life of the Author by Samuel Dunn) reprinted by H.E. Schmul Publishers (Salem, OH: Convention Book Store, 1967).

Johnson and Letitia, and preached in the German church (occupied by one of Lady Huntingdon's churches) on Thursday, 22 May 1806.<sup>60</sup>

Dow found himself being slowly accepted by the leadership of English Methodism, even having an audience with Gideon Ousley.<sup>61</sup> He was invited to a meeting "which they called a camp-meeting, but I a field-meeting; there being no tents, only the open air, in imitation of America."<sup>62</sup> At conference time a letter from Nicholas Snethen was presented, in which Snethen lists several of Dow's faults, and warns against receiving Dow – this in spite of the appearance Snethen made before the Notary endorsing Dow just before Dow sailed for England.

On July 19<sup>th</sup> Dow met a third division of Methodists – the Christian Revivalists – whom he had previously noted as Free-Gospellers, and whom he saw as closer to the American Methodist Episcopalians. He attended their love-feast and then spoke to five thousand in the street. He mentioned the annoyance he experienced at the noise they made during his sermon, along with loud Amens – he claimed he would rather have heard a dog bark. These sounds seemed hypocritical to Dow, but he was reluctant to say anything against the practice, in case some of them truly did feel the presence of the Spirit.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dow, 188.

<sup>61</sup> John Vaughan, *Life Stories of Remarkable Preachers: The Wise, The Witty, The Quaint, The Eccentric, The Eloquent*, (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 149-176. Gideon Ousley (1762-1839) was known as the "one-eyed Preacher of Ireland, as well as the Tongue of Fire.

<sup>62</sup> Dow, 190. The early Primitive Methodists suffered from this same indiscretion – calling their "day of praying on Mow Cop" a camp-meeting.

<sup>63</sup> Dow, 202.

## **Sowing Seeds in Congleton**

An interesting development is recorded under Lorenzo's entry for 13 November, 1806:

Some months ago I took tea in company with a preacher's wife of the name of Beaumont, and gave her a camp-meeting book. They were stationed this year at Congleton, and the account which she gave of me, caused a desire in the breasts of the official members that I should pay their town a visit, particularly after they had heard of the revival in Macclesfield, and some of them had heard me preach. It was tried at the leader's meeting whether I should be invited there. Some strenuously opposed it, among whom was the young preacher. Beaumont, the assistant, was silent. However, it was carried by a great majority; and one told the young preacher that he had better go home to the plough, than to talk in such a manner.<sup>64</sup>

The area around Congleton was the seedbed of Primitive Methodism. No doubt several of the founding members participated in the hubbub touched off by this meeting. Dow wrote that he took Dr. Johnson with him to this meeting. Dow arrived about 6 p.m. and was well-received. By 7 p.m. the chapel was filled. Dow appointed four meetings for the next day – by 5:30 a.m. the chapel was full again, with more at noon and 6 p.m., and an overflow crowd at 8 p.m. Four meetings were held the next day (15<sup>th</sup>), as well as Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup>, and Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Johnson went to Macclesfield to hold meetings concurrently. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Dow preached his farewell message then left for Macclesfield. Mourners followed him demanding to meet again, while meetings continued under Beaumont at Congleton. A great commotion favoring camp-meetings spread through the area. The participants in Congleton were mostly Old Methodists who were clamoring for

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<sup>64</sup> Dow, 204.

a more personal and lively faith, and were discussing the possibility of leaving the Methodists to join with either the Quaker Methodists or the Revivalists in Macclesfield.<sup>65</sup>

### **A Fresh Trial**

The next day Dow spoke in Knuttsford to a less receptive audience, and then the day after that he returned to Warrington to find Peggy lying sick in bed. She had given birth to a daughter – named Letitia after Dr. Johnson’s wife – and now a “spiritual daughter” from Elsby agreed to take the baby away to care for her while Peggy dealt with her “heavy illness.”<sup>66</sup>

Lorenzo admitted that this was a fresh trial for Peggy: he was called by God to go to Ireland. He had to go now if he was going at all, for he was planning to return to America in the spring. Major plans for trips and voyages like this while his baby daughter was being cared for by another and his wife was on her sickbed presented no problem to Lorenzo. Before long Dow was in Dublin. It was while he was away from Peggy in Ireland that he received news that his daughter Letitia had died. He rejoiced that she escaped the evil to come, “with all the vain snares of this delusive world.”<sup>67</sup>

Dow’s journal lists about 20 towns in which he preached in Ireland. He returned to Dublin, having been gone “sixty-seven days, in which time I travelled about seventeen

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<sup>65</sup> Dow, 205.

<sup>66</sup> Dow, 207.

<sup>67</sup> Dow, 208.

hundred English miles, and held about two hundred meetings, in most which the quickening power of God was to be felt and some were set at liberty before we parted.”<sup>68</sup>

Dow does not give us a date in his journal, but after returning from Ireland to England he paid another visit to Congleton, as well as Boslem (Burslem), where the seed of revival by means of camp-meetings had been germinating since Dow’s last visit. This region gave rise to the Primitive Methodist Connexion, as will be seen in section two of this thesis, but Dow concluded his work here and noted that it was time to return to America. He boasted that “more than one hundred had been taken into society since my other visit.” These are not yet Primitive Methodists – Dow is in America before the Mow Cop day of prayer on 31 May, 1807, that created the enthusiasm resulting in the separation between Old Society Methodists and New/Primitive Methodists three or four years later. Dow commented that there were six kinds of Methodists in England at this time: “1. Old Society; 2. Kilhamites; 3. Quaker-Methodists; 4. Whitefield’s Methodists; 5. Revivalists, or Free-gospellers; 6. Welsh Methodists, (called jumpers,) a happy, simple pious people, but the best account, besides the Church Methodists.”<sup>69</sup>

In his previous list from his first visit to Ireland, Dow had kept the Quaker Methodists as a separate category, apart from the Old Society, Kilhamite, and Revivalist

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<sup>68</sup> Dow, 212. “Old Society” refers to those who affiliate historically with John Wesley and his societies; Kilhamites are those who follow Alexander Kilham, who led a reform movement after Wesley’s death; “Quaker-Methodists” are those who prefer the stillness doctrines that Wesley condemned in the Moravians shortly after his whole-hearted endorsement of them; “Whitefield’s Methodists” were English followers of a slightly more Calvinistic form of Methodism endorsed by Lady Huntingdon and George Whitefield; Revivalists are noted for being less inclined to follow the order Wesley demanded of his Methodists (Primitive Methodists were influenced by these English Midlanders, and were even known as Revivalists or Free-Gospellers); Welsh Methodists were the result of Howell Harris’s preaching and the awakening in Wales long before what is known today as the “Welsh Revival.” See Edward Morgan, *The Life and Times of Howell Harris: The First Itinerant Preacher in Wales*, (London, UK: Holywell: Hughes & Butler, 1852).

<sup>69</sup> Dow, 213.



Methodists, for a total of four kinds of Methodist. In this list he adds Whitefield's Methodist (possibly tracing their origin to Lady Huntingdon's Society), and Welsh Methodists (following Howell Harris; also known as Calvinistic Methodists). Some would join Whitefield's group to the Wales group, but Lady Huntingdon's group was too dignified to be known as "jumpers." In this list of six Dow does not include the Church Methodists – those who held to Wesleyan principles without leaving the Church of England, but there were not many of these by this time.<sup>70</sup>

Dow made a pertinent comment about the Old Society Methodists, with whom the American Methodists would most likely identify: they preached during church hours, "which Mr. Wesley did not allow." They practiced communion and baptism among themselves, even though their leaders are not ordained, claiming that the "power which qualifies them to preach, does not make a man half a minister; and if he be properly called, and qualified by God to administer the substance in the word to the salvation of souls, the same of course is fit to administer the shadow in form, and of course count the ordination but a form."<sup>71</sup> Dow noted that the leading chapels in England have instrumental music, which he equated to a machine that has no sense of divine worship, making it only a sham, a form without power. He believed the "plan fallen upon in these United States" is the best one, excelling that in England or Ireland, and the itinerant ministry the most profitable and least expensive. He criticized the European tendency to carry on the faith generationally rather than evangelistically, and likened the model to a grandfather who owned a champion race horse who wills it to his son, who then wills it to

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<sup>70</sup> Dow, 213.

<sup>71</sup> Dow, 213.

his son – the grandson brags about the race horse, but the horse has long passed and is nothing but dead bones.<sup>72</sup>

Dow was also critical of the funds raised by the English Methodists, claiming they proved to be a temptation to some. He called for the Methodists in America to remain simple and sincere, having “frequently recourse to their first principles in the Lord,” resulting in the Lord’s favor and blessing, and a happy life.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately for the person studying Lorenzo Dow’s influence on the founders of the Primitive Methodist Church, as well as other forms of English Methodism, Dow’s Journal stops here. Dow did not always write in his journal each day. The facts pertinent to our understanding of the men who eventually were asked to leave the Old Society Methodists, and then went on to form the Primitive Methodist Church, seem to have been recorded by Dow some time after they occurred – perhaps during his voyage back to America or even after that, when he was preparing this section of his Journal for publication. Dow gave only scant details of his interaction with Hugh Bourne or William Clowes, who went on to found the Primitive Methodist Church several years later. And upon his arrival back in the United States Dow entered into his “Eccentric Cosmopolite” stage – an alternate identity Dow invented. His “Journal” ended and he took up his personal story as his new self, The Eccentric Cosmopolite. He alternated between referring to himself in the third and then in the first person. Dow remarried soon after Peggy’s death (weeks) in his typical bizarre way. He became prosperous as well as popular, then the crowds lost interest as he sunk into scandal over land speculation and

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<sup>72</sup> Dow, 214.

<sup>73</sup> Dow, 214.

the use of book profits. He continued his extensive travel, and saw much of the growing American nation.

After the birth of the Primitive Methodist Church Dow took credit for the positive outcome of an interaction with its founders, as noted in *Eccentric Cosmopolite's Journal*, but for all of his pathologies, Dow has overcome the need for the sanction of his betters, and his adventures have given him more experience than sanctioned circuit-riders twice his age.<sup>74</sup> As he had guessed, surviving through his twenty-second year proved to him that he was obeying the Lord; and it is better to obey God than men.

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<sup>74</sup> The last three chapters of Dow's *Journal* are referred to by Dow as "An Account of Eccentric Cosmopolite." Unfortunately an early printer of Dow's Writings refers to Dow's entire *Journal* as "An Account of Eccentric Cosmopolite," but what the printer labels as chapter XX, XXI and Conclusion are Dow's record of his alter-ego, E.C. What the printer labels as Chapter XX is Dow's summation of several years of activity after returning to America from overseas, and Chapter XXI takes up Dow's journaling in 1813, seven years after that return. The Conclusion is Dow's summary of his life concluding the entire "Journal." The last three chapters are relatively brief and less detailed than the first nineteen chapters.

## CHAPTER 3

### COMING TO TERMS: EMBRACING THE ECCENTRIC COSMOPOLITE

#### **Travelling Takes a Toll**

An intriguing shift takes place in Lorenzo's Journal, starting in Chapter XX: he is no longer chronicling his life as Lorenzo Dow – now he has become the scribe for his alternate self, *The Eccentric Cosmopolite*. At the end of Chapter XIX Lorenzo Dow returned to the United States from England. He had seen success in the midlands of England among colliers and pottery workers, and though their daughter Letitia has died in infancy, Lorenzo and Peggy seem fairly content with their tour of England, and are now ready to get back to America. The desperate tone of Chapter XX though shatters the serenity of the Journal.

Lorenzo Dow's writings have appeared under several long titles. The copy this author is using is a modern reprint of a scanned 1849 copy of Dow's works. The original version of Dow's *Writings* that was available to this author was printed in the late 1800's, and though it is identical, was by a completely different publisher, and was given a different title.<sup>1</sup> However, while both copies have the subtitle of Chapter XX "A Short Account of Eccentric Cosmopolite," the 1849 copy refers to the entire Journal as the writings of "Eccentric Cosmopolite." The book printed in New York limits the reference

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<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *The Life, Travels, Labors, and Writings of Lorenzo Dow; including his Singular and Erratic Wanderings in Europe and America. To which is added His Chain, Journey From Babylon to Jerusalem; Dialogue Between Curious and Singular; Hints on the Fulfillment of Prophecy, Etc., Etc. and the Vicissitudes, or Journey of Life, and Supplemental Reflections by Peggy Dow*. (New York, NY: United States Book Co., 150 Worth Street, Copyright by John E. Potter & Company, Philadelphia, no date). The only evidence of publishing date information in the book is the notation that the book was purchased for \$2.75 by Mary L. Buckman of Lehighton, PA on August 24, 1896. She may have purchased it used.

to “Eccentric Cosmopolite” to only Chapter XX. This makes more sense, for nowhere else in the Journal does Dow refer to himself as “Eccentric Cosmopolite,” or, as he refers to himself in the third person in Chapter XX, “E.C.”

Chapter XX begins with what appears to be a warrant for arrest, with blanks that he does not fill in. The entire chapter is written cryptically, and includes apparent account of his near-arrest for heresy and treason, and his narrow escape from England, supposedly while his pursuers were searching other ships in the harbor. He claims that a defect in the workmanship of the ship he was on forced his captain to keep the ship “half a point nigher the wind than usual – hence ships at the leeward must run parallel, or cross our track to gain the weather gage, in order to bear upon us – therefore would lose time and distance.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to dodging his pursuers on land by maintaining his usual pace of keeping appointments, Lorenzo took advantage of fog, and the fact that his pursuers wound up in a boat that sprang a leak and had to watch from the shore as the ship the Dows were on pulled out to sea. Also there is a mention of a bribe to the captain. In any case, “Cosmopolite was preserved to Columbia’s shores, for which praised be the Lord!”<sup>3</sup>

While on board the *Averick* Lorenzo was able to hold meetings with the Quakers and other passengers, until a rumor began to circulate that the captain had given Dow a gift of ten pounds, and the other passengers seemed to feel Dow should split it evenly among them all. Of course, Dow didn’t feel this way, and even denied having received a

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<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; or the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: containing His Experience and Travels, in Europe and America, up to near His Fiftieth Year. Also, his Polemic Writings, to which is added, The “Journey of Life” by Peggy Dow*, Revised and Corrected with Notes. Sixth Edition – Averaging 4000 each. (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 305. I cannot determine if this is a nautical actuality, or if Lorenzo is just making it up.

<sup>3</sup> Dow, 305.

gift in the first place.<sup>4</sup> But he showed how to let bygones be bygones by answering questions concerning the customs and situations of America from those on board who had never been there. Then Dow accused these passengers of blaming him for the less than utopian account he gave of life in the United States – apparently they were fleeing oppression and making their way to the “land of liberty” and expected it to actually be the happy haven they longed for it to be.<sup>5</sup>

The predicament of being innocent yet accused by ungrateful people he was only trying to help is Dow’s theme in Chapter XX of his *Journal*. Dow is the innocent bystander throughout the chapter and his accusers used him as their scapegoat. Dow’s account of two passengers on board who predicted great success for themselves in the New World, but ended up impoverished years later suggests that Dow did not write this chapter while on board, and may have waited several years before taking up pen and paper to continue his journal after his departure from England under clouds of suspicion.

### **All Was Not Well at the Mississippi**

Dow writes of sensing a dark premonition concerning the Mississippi while he is still on the ship. Whether he truly felt this premonition, he writes of having expressed this foreboding more than once or twice. On landing he went to Virginia to see Stith Mead, then was off to New England, holding meetings and having “good times” on the way.<sup>6</sup> Dow wrote of a storm that began to gather, and that, even in Europe, Cosmopolite “was attacked with spasms of a most extraordinary kind.”<sup>7</sup> Dow was fitted with a stiff leather

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<sup>4</sup> Dow, 305.

<sup>5</sup> Dow, 306.

<sup>6</sup> Dow, 306.

<sup>7</sup> Dow, 306.

jacket, or harness, to help him remain in the saddle. He purchased two mules to pull a carriage, but the mules broke down. He acquired a horse, but it was “starved” so as to prove useless to him. Then he left New England and travelled to Mississippi Territory through Georgia, and along the way received confirmation that there was trouble brewing.

Lorenzo’s Brother-in-law, Smith Miller, and his wife, Hannah, moved to Mississippi Territory and purchased some land – at first 324 acres. The seller verbally agreed to build a mill on the land so it would be productive upon Smith’s arrival. The mill was not finished, and when Smith arrived the seller refused to carry out the transfer of property. The original money for the sale was gone (it was probably supplied by Dow in the first place), and Smith was asking Dow to cover the expenses of making the purchase complete – paying twice for the property on which a useless mill was sitting. Dow had received money in advance for the printing and sale of some of his books, which he used to help out his brother-in-law. Of course, the money was lost, Dow was unable to get the books printed, and those who subscribed for the books were upset at not receiving the books they paid for in advance. Now, with a sick wife and no home (the unfinished mill was uninhabitable), rumors started that Dow was living in the lap of luxury, with riches and a fine brick house, “like a nabob in the east.”<sup>8</sup>

Around this time Lorenzo had a dream of John Quackenbush’s house being burned to the ground.<sup>9</sup> When he woke in a fright he told Peggy that he expected to hear bad news from New York. Sure enough a friend from Virginia informed him that, upon

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<sup>8</sup> Dow, 308.

<sup>9</sup> Dow, 309. John Quackenbush and Nicolas Snethen were Dow’s choices for character references to carry to England.

opening someone else's mail, he learned that John Quackenbush had eloped to the West Indies with another man's wife, and had taken Dow's money that was entrusted to him to pay Dow's bill with Mr. W. (a Printer?). Nicolas Snethen, Dow's former friend, had appeared before the court on his own and presented testimony that placed all the blame for the charge on Dow, with the additional charge that Dow was a "Sabbath Breaker" because he sold subscriptions to books on the Lord's Day. So now Dow, charged with being the sole agent in all the misdoings of James Quackenbush and Nicolas Snethen, is a fugitive in Mississippi Territory with debts for his brother-in-law's property purchased site unseen, and a stack of subscriptions for books that Mr. W. would never print now, even if Dow had the money.

When all these difficulties came together, Lorenzo Dow had another dream: he was caught in a wide stream rushing toward the ocean in which was a great whirlpool. The sides of the stream were quicksand, and the people lining the stream were so caught up in their diversions that they could not see Dow heading for the whirlpool. Then a man in white popped up in the water and pulled Dow back to the land. Dow was missing one shoe, so the people concluded he would never travel or preach again, but then morning came and both shoes were together on the beach. Dow concluded from this dream that the Lord still had plans for him.

### **Back from Disaster**

Around this time Dow retired to a "cane brake" (sic) at the foot of a large hill.<sup>10</sup> He left Peggy there, apparently in one of the Territories, and returned to "The States" to

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<sup>10</sup> Dow, 310. Dow's writing here is so cryptic that it is hard to tell if he is dreaming or actually experiencing this retreat to the cane break. But Peggy speaks of their time there as a balm from the Lord.



tour Georgia and raise some funds with preaching. He was able to come up with the subscription money, then went to see Mr. W. to explain the corrupt deeds of Quackenbush. On his way he happened to stop at the home of Quackenbush, and accidentally found a letter Quackenbush had opened. The correspondence was from Dow with a letter Dow had sent to Quackenbush along with a note for two hundred and eight dollars. Quackenbush had taken the note and had placed the letter on a shelf for over a year. Dow was able to take the letter to Mr. W. and explain what had happened. Mr. W. insisted on payment, and Dow said it would be hard to pay twice, but was willing to submit to an arbitrator. When the time came for the arbitrator(s) to arrive, who should it be at the door but the sheriff coming to carry Dow off to the “tight house.”<sup>11</sup>

John Quackenbush died in the West Indies. The assignees for his estate appeared just in time to deliver Dow from the long arm of the law. They stepped in to fight Mr. W. at court and agreed to give “Cosmopolite” a bond of indemnity. Dow was relieved of paying the note a second time, for which Mr. W. called him a “scoundrel,” but Dow had been called worse.<sup>12</sup>

Dow made his way to Boston to pick up a few of his books, which he apparently sold to purchase a wagon and a horse, then he returned to Peggy in Mississippi Territory. They left for Georgia without saying “goodbye” to Smith Miller, and in dreams were led to Lynchburg, VA, where Peggy was “taken sick,” and had to be detained for two years.

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<sup>11</sup> Dow, 312. Dow seems to be writing “reality” here.

<sup>12</sup> Dow, 313.

Lorenzo also suffered from “spasms” and was apparently assisted by a group of pious Presbyterians.<sup>13</sup> This first land deal was not Lorenzo’s last, nor his most disastrous.

### **Back to Work**

Chapter XXI of Dow’s *Journal* picked up Lorenzo’s story – 7 years later. The bizarre thing is that this chapter recounts many of the events from Chapter XX, except Dow returns to his narrative memoir style. In this chapter Dow offers a more discernable account of his brother-in-law’s debacle in Mississippi Territory, and of his wife’s sickness, and the springs in Virginia.<sup>14</sup> He recounted some of his “horse woes,” which were common in the days of horse thieves, and which are reenacted in our own day whenever we purchase a used automobile from a less-than-honest dealer.

Dow told an interesting tale of his “lappel coat” (sic), single-breasted, which caused offense to his audience. He was owed \$20 by a man with no cash. A deal was made whereby a garment dealer who sold coats “ready-made” from England gave Dow a coat so he could get back on the road without losing his money. Unfortunately the coat appeared to be above Dow’s station in life, so Dow gave it away eighteen months later to avoid a controversy in the town he was visiting. This was America, after all.

Dow was still quite popular at this time, perhaps because he would give away a nice coat rather than appear well-off. He stopped in Virginia and was welcomed to preach in the home of a man who disdained regular circuit preaching.

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<sup>13</sup> Dow, 313. Once again, there is no way of telling if Dow is referring to actual events or to an allegorical recounting of his experience. Did he have actual spasms? Did the Presbyterians give him a home, or did they assist in some other way?

<sup>14</sup> Dow, 316

Dow also told of hearing “Jefferson’s Bulldogs” firing cannon shot at an English frigate off the coast of North Carolina. He referred to the King as neighbor George.

Jesse Lee and Dow met on the way to Baltimore. Dow pointed out that Jesse had been the chaplain to the US Senate for longer than any other individual since the founding of the “true American Federal Government.”<sup>15</sup> Dow returned to his vague, third person style of narrative, but he seemed to be saying that Jesse Lee turned over one of his speaking engagements to Dow in the Capitol Building before the Senate. Dow claimed to have stayed with Jesse Lee one night, when he had a dream that a rat bit the end of his finger and would not be shaken off. Sure enough the next day Dow was swindled out of \$38.<sup>16</sup>

Dow mentioned that Francis Asbury was sick, “and perhaps about to end his long and arduous labor. What then?”<sup>17</sup> Francis Asbury was barely tolerant of Dow, but did not go out of his way to thwart Dow’s preaching; Dow appreciated this. Only Adam Clarke, of all Methodist leaders, appreciated Dow more than Asbury. The lower on the totem pole, the less a leader cared for Dow.

Dow closed this chapter with an account of his and Peggy’s appearance at the Custom House of New York, where he had to declare his name and parentage, as well as the ship on which he travelled to England in 1805, and the details of his trip, with an explanation for any interaction he may have had with the British government, etc. He was restricted in his travels during the investigation of his story, and not allowed to preach. Dow was often harassed in this way, but the tension during this time of war seemed to

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<sup>15</sup> Dow, 320

<sup>16</sup> Dow, 321.

<sup>17</sup> Dow, 321.

warrant extra care on the part of officials who naturally suspected someone who traveled as extensively as Dow, and who spoke before the crowds of people that Dow addressed. This suspicion goes back to Conventicle Act days in England, when outdoor assembly was considered an indication of treason against the throne. The King of England was the Defender of the Faith, and he provided churches and chapels for assembly. Any outdoor assembly, even for religious purposes, was obviously outside the purview of the king's superintendence of religious matters, and for that reason considered treasonous. John Wesley often experienced the Constable of a town appearing at his outdoor meetings to read the Conventicle Act, or even the Riot Act, before dispersing the attendees. No doubt someone as popular as Dow would have rumors flying about concerning the attempts of the British government to arrest him, so the Custom House in New York would also have their suspicions about Dow.

The editors of Dow's writings would clearly want to make their publication as interesting as possible to increase sales. At the end of the chapter the editors include an account of Dow walking to a preaching appointment in Lexington, KY. He met some men on horses going to this event, and one of them offered Dow his horse. Dow was tired so gladly accepted the offer. Dow rode the horse to the venue, dismounted, and immediately began to preach. This is seen as eccentric behavior, and bizarre enough to warrant the ink it takes to finish off a full page.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dow, 322.

## **Lorenzo's Conclusion**

Chapter XXII is the conclusion to Dow's Journal. This is unusual as Dow lived for another eighteen years, and was itinerating when he died outside Washington D.C. He does not include the account of his wife Peggy's death, nor the account of his marriage mere weeks later. Once again he covered some of the same ground as in the last two chapters. For example he discussed his mistake of assigning too many books to each meeting house, thus creating a surplus of inventory, for which he still had to pay, so that when he left for Europe in 1805 he had only \$10 to his name. He reiterated that the last seven years had been a school – Dowspeak for "I suffered, but learned a lesson."<sup>19</sup>

He added some theological speculation, especially on the subject of "Last Days," which happen to be the age in which he is writing, and he expected the troublesome times to grow worse.

Dow went over his horse woes once again. His reputation depended on arriving at appointments in time to preach. When his transportation was unreliable, he was late or unable to attend altogether, and this disappointment caused the crowds to grumble. Their discontent with him traveled to the next town as well. If this continued, whole counties would be reluctant to risk a long walk to the camp meeting grounds only to discover the evangelist was not there to entertain.

Dow added an incident where an "A-L-L-part" minister opposed him, but then he gives us further details about his opportunity to speak in Congress-Hall before the House, when Jesse Lee surrendered his appointment to him.

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<sup>19</sup> Dow, 325.

In this chapter Dow devoted several pages to his fondness for Quakers. He wrote of some of their accomplishments, and of his delight in attending their meetings and sitting in silence with them. He marveled that William Penn had no fights with Indians while New England was experiencing regular skirmishes and some outright war. Finally he attributed passage of the Act of Toleration under King William to the influence of Quakers.<sup>20</sup>

Of course Lorenzo must leave his sick wife, Peggy, and travel. He made his way to the former Otterbein Meeting House, now occupied by African Americans. He spoke in the Dutch United Brethren Meeting House, and the Bedford Court House. On Sunday, 1 October, 1815 he was in Pittsburgh, where he stayed for a week, and prophesied that this city, the former Fort Duquesne, would someday be one of the greatest manufacturing towns in America.<sup>21</sup> He was referring to the glass works, not the steel works (too soon). He also admired the turnpike road and the steamboats that carried goods and passengers west.

Dow gave an extended account of his trip down the Ohio River, stopping in Cincinnati and several other towns new to him. He saw Lawrenceburg in Indiana Territory, which had 68,000 residents and would soon be a state; and he enjoyed the falls at Louisville, KY. He made his way down the Mississippi River to Mississippi Territory, and included a lengthy description by Eliza Bryan of the horrific earthquakes that commenced in 1811 and were just starting to grow less and less destructive (1815).

When Dow arrived in New Orleans he held several meetings and baptisms over many days, ate with the governor, and then left for Balize, the Bahamas, and finally

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<sup>20</sup> Dow, 332-337.

<sup>21</sup> Dow, 339.

Philadelphia, whence he travelled to New York, then to Coventry to see Peggy and his father. He took another trip to New York, this time with Peggy, saw Philadelphia, New Jersey, then back to Coventry. He closed his Journal with the notation, just as he approached his 39<sup>th</sup> birthday, that he was able to see three of his sisters while on a tour of the Genesee region of New York, and Vermont, etc. He testified that he saw the spirit of enquiry increasing and has heard of many revivals along the way.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Dow, 340-355.

## CHAPTER 4

### A LIFE OF MINISTRY: THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO SAY

#### **The New Jerusalem**

One wonders why Dow's Journal ends at his birthday in October of 1816. Dow lived for another 18 years, and we know he kept a journal, but it is not included among his published works. He ended dramatically: "In a few weeks I expect to start for the WEST again, but where I may be this time twelve months, is very uncertain with me; whether in England, Sierreleone in Africa, West Indies, or New England – or ETERNITY."<sup>1</sup>

He gives us a hint by capitalizing "WEST" – on 2 November, 1816 Lorenzo purchased forty-six thousand acres on the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers in Wisconsin Territory. This was not the Mississippi River he was used to from his brother-in-law's property fiasco. This was far north – not far from where St. Paul and Minneapolis are today. His plans showed a new city called, "Loren, or the City of Peace," and the design resembled that of Philadelphia down to the central square for public buildings and the names of the streets.<sup>2</sup> This would be his refuge from the squabbling churches of the more worldly citizens. Like his hero William Penn, Dow would open his city of peace to every lonely soul seeking relief from oppression. Dow had had his fill of bigotry and was ready

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Coleman Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow: The Bearer of the Word*, (New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company, 1928), 174.

<sup>2</sup> Sellers, 175. Philadelphia had expanded into the "suburbs" past 14<sup>th</sup> Street, which became Broad Street, and the new center of town. The streets named after trees were extended in a straight line west from the old city and the Delaware River. Dow kept these street names, in order, in his New Jerusalem.



to provide asylum for others who suffered from it. The Quakerizing influence of Dr. Paul Johnson, and his admiration for Penn and the Quakers had borne this fruit.

Ten days later Dow added 77,000 acres to this tract, at a cost of \$19,250. He would name this land “Beulah Ethiopia,” an obvious reference to the holy city for African Americans, perhaps a refuge for runaway slaves. How African Americans who were used to the South would adjust to the harsh winters of Wisconsin was not a difficulty for Dow. He had previously spoken against the vainglorious assumption of power of the Methodist bishops that forced the African separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church begun by Richard Allen, and this was his solution.<sup>3</sup> Dow, like Charles Finney, looked for a re-integrated congregation of worshipers.<sup>4</sup>

“On the twenty-first, a third tract was added at a cost of seventeen thousand five hundred dollars. This was the ‘Cosmopolite’s Mount Sinai Domain,’ seventy thousand acres, ‘including the scite wherein the Sioux village now stands and the great council cave.’”<sup>5</sup> This cave extended an unmeasured distance into the earth and the walls were covered with picture-writing of the Native Americans who regarded the cave with awe as a sacred place. Was Dow trying to set aside this ground for Native Americans in perpetuity?

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Allen was of African descent, and the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. When African Americans were assigned a section in the gallery of the now Historic Saint George’s Methodist Church in Philadelphia, in 1792, which they had just helped to build, Allen went down the street and founded the Bethel Methodist Church in 1794, a church exclusively for those of “African Descent.” An acquaintance, Absalom Jones, began St. Thomas’s African Methodist Episcopal Church not far from Allen’s church. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 108-109.

<sup>4</sup> Michael C. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Sellers, 177.

Dow purchased three more tracts of land, for a total of four hundred and fifty-two thousand acres, and a total cost of about ninety thousand dollars. How did Dow arrive at sums of money like this? His preaching brought in just enough to pay road expenses. The only other source of income at this time was the sale of his books and pamphlets. He was selling his two volume set of *Writings* for two dollars, and he always had several copies on his person as he travelled. Also, peddlers sold his books for him. No doubt he kept the actual figures to himself, since Peggy had been requesting that they settle down on a small piece of land in Virginia. She could not have known about his grandiose plans for Wisconsin Territory.

Ironically, in spite of his hopes to bring White disenfranchised Christians, African Americans and Native Americans together, none of the acreage was ceded to Dow – the US Congress was considering the validity of a sale of land held by the Sioux nation. Benjamin Munn, who arranged the sale, had purchased the land from the heirs of Captain Jonathan Carver, who purchased it from the Nawdowissie Tribe in 1767. “The deed of relinquishment, with the names and totems of the chiefs concerned was at that time at Washington awaiting the official ratification, together with a number of reliable testimonials of its authenticity.”<sup>6</sup> The government at the time was reluctant to order the resettlement of the Sioux nation, and offer protection to so few settlers on so vast a piece of land, for the benefit of a handful of land speculators. Dow must have seen this situation developing in this way: he sold off a hundred thousand acres for ten dollars, and twenty-five thousand more for a hundred dollars. By the time the preliminary business for

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<sup>6</sup> Sellers, 179.

the sale was complete the winter was too far advanced for Dow's trip WEST. Dow and Peggy returned to Coventry.<sup>7</sup>

Dow's dream for the earthly Utopia was dashed when President Monroe sent an unfavorable report of the Carver Grant to the US Congress in 1822. By the time the debate resolved the land dispute in 1825, the Senate and House had voted to annul the validity of the claim and Dow was denied title to the land he still "held." The Sioux had no recollection of the transaction carried out between Carver and the Nawdowissie Tribe, and the government refused to kick the Sioux off the land (not yet). Lorenzo's hopes to overcome Puritan bigotry and establish William Penn's dreamed-of Beulah were shattered.<sup>8</sup> Lorenzo could not publish this in his journal.

### **Family Disgrace**

What happened next was more of an embarrassment to Peggy than to Lorenzo. Peggy's parents passed away when she was six, so Peggy was raised by her older sister, Hannah. Hannah married Smith Miller, who took Peggy in as his own daughter. After Peggy's marriage to Lorenzo, Smith and Hannah Miller moved from Western, NY, to a piece of land in Mississippi Territory with a small, unfinished mill on the tiny property. After losing everything and being far from home, Hannah was fed up, and eloped with another man. When Peggy found out she was devastated. She was shocked at the suddenness with which those assured of salvation can be tempted to sin. Would she also prove to be unfaithful to her Lord, and her Lorenzo?

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<sup>7</sup> Sellers, 179.

<sup>8</sup> Sellers, 228-9.

Dow's Writings were moving onto the 1816 Best Seller List. Part of the two volumes was Dow's *Reflections on Matrimony*, which placed Peggy in a very favorable, though very submissive, light. Lorenzo was able to leave for the WEST in March of 1817, while Peggy and one of Lorenzo's sisters moved Humphrey Dow, Lorenzo's father, from the family farm in Coventry, to a small home just south of there, in Hebron, CT. Peggy and Dow's sister regularly attended the Methodist Meeting House, taking Humphrey with them, but Dow's father remained gloomy. Was he forced to sell his farm to cover some financial transaction of Lorenzo?

Lorenzo returned home in the winter of 1818, then in early summer left for New York and a third voyage – a two-year tour of England.

### **Ranters**

There was a war being fought when Dow made his second trip overseas – his first trip to England proper – in 1805 and '06. At that time even a letter signed by Secretary of State James Madison did not answer all concerns about the eccentric, travelling American.<sup>9</sup> Now in 1818 a passport was easier to obtain, and Dow had the sense, once the ship landed at Liverpool, to go directly to the man who watched his boat pull away from the dock so many years before. Dow apologized to Major Sirr, who was able to laugh at the recollection of the incident, and who signed and stamped Dow's papers.

Dow's first order of business, though, was to find Dr. Johnson. Dow could not use Johnson's address as his place of residence, as he was never in one place for more than a couple days, but the Doctor could accompany him on his travels.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sellers, 186.

<sup>10</sup> Sellers, 187.

Dow and Dr. Paul Johnson immediately plunged into the camp meetings and the legal battles of their friends, the Primitive Methodists. These men and women had taken this name officially in 1811, but they were universally known as Ranters.<sup>11</sup> Dow explained that this name came from their practice of processing together through a town singing loudly the praises of God until they came to a convenient spot for preaching to the crowds who would assemble to see what was going on. According to Dow, if you came to a town and asked for the Primitive Methodists, few could tell you; but if you inquired about the Ranters, everyone knew who you were looking for.<sup>12</sup> Lorenzo spent some time with them, preached in some of their chapels and at a few of their one-day camp meetings, then he and Dr. Johnson left for Ireland.

The Irish Methodists were involved in a schism of their own, so Lorenzo and Dr. Johnson stayed out of the fray. Unfortunately the Presbyterians of the area heard about Dow's presence and old hostilities were reborn – “stones, brickbats, slush, mud, sticks and dead cats, and whatever came to hand,” flew like hail upon Dow and Johnson, with cries of “Heretic!” bringing the police to their rescue. Captain Cole of the packet ship arrived and rescued our hero, who left, in May of 1819 – one year early – for home. He could have gone to England, but letters from Peggy telling of her grave illness called him back to the United States.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In print, this pejorative name always appears as “RANTERS.”

<sup>12</sup> Sellers, 187.

<sup>13</sup> Sellers, 190.

### **Peggy's Death – January 6, 1820**

It is likely Dow had hoped to return to America with a boat load of English Primitive Methodists to populate a second New World, but the urgency of Peggy's letters made that an impossibility.<sup>14</sup> Peggy was in the grip of tuberculosis when Dow arrived in June, 1819. By January of 1820 Peggy was asking Dow if he had secured a coffin. He had: a white one. On the sixth of the month she succumbed to the disease. Dow himself suffered from scrofula – a disease associated with the highly contagious tuberculosis – for many years after this. Dow entered into a depression following Peggy's death. It is doubtful that he loved her as much as she loved him, but her presence and willful submission to him filled a need. Within three months Dow was married again – appropriately on April 1.<sup>15</sup>

Dow's wedding to Lucy Dolbeare is a story that must be told. The scene is an open-air meeting under the great elm on Bean Hill near Norwich, southeast of Hebron, Connecticut:

The story goes that Lorenzo, after preaching a sermon devoted chiefly to Peggy's purity and fidelity, concluded the discourse by announcing: "I am now a candidate for matrimony; and if there is any woman in this audience who is willing to marry me, I would thank her to rise." In response to this sudden opportunity, two women stood up, one near the pulpit, and one farther back in the congregation. For a while he scrutinized them and then pronounced with great solemnity: "There are two. I think this one near me rose first; at any rate, I will have her."<sup>16</sup>

Lucy was much more willful than Peggy, and proved to be a thorn in Lorenzo's side, as he, no doubt, was in hers, with all his stubborn travelling and eccentricity.

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<sup>14</sup> Sellers, 191.

<sup>15</sup> Sellers, 196.

<sup>16</sup> Sellers, 197-8.

## **Lorenzo Dow's Family Medicine**

Lorenzo introduced Lucy to the nation during their first year of marriage. They toured all of the New England states, then turned south as the weather grew cold. They made a stop in Washington, D.C. long enough to get a patent for Lorenzo Dow's Family Medicine – a gift to America from England thanks to Dr. Paul Johnson. The records of the US Patent Office contain Lorenzo's own description of his miraculous product:

1. Take nine pounds of genuine Epsom Salts, dissolved in soft boiling water the whole making eight quarts to which add the tincture of Bloodroot (*sanguinaria*) say four ounces. 2. Take one pound pure salts Nitre dissolved in boiling water adding eight ounces sulphuric acid of the best quality the whole making four quarts all of which must be stirred with a wooden stick and when cool mix the same with the above Epsom Salts and Bloodroot solution. Which will constitute Dow's Family Medicine in its full strength in its concentrated state. The whole process must be performed in stone or earthen vessels, and afterwards preserved in glass. One or two table-spoonsfull in a half pint of cold water or less quantity of each may be taken once in two hours until it operates freely. This medicine has been found of general utility and efficacy in all those disorders called bilious and effections of the liver exceeding common credibility even in many cases wherein repeated courses of mercurial have been used in vain. In costive habits a corrective and in Disentary a speedy relief is obtained. Lorenzo Dow<sup>17</sup>

Lorenzo Dow's Family Medicine helped finance Dow's trip through the southern states, especially with a second, complaining mouth to feed.

## **Hammet Libel Controversy**

In January, 1821, Lucy and Lorenzo were in Charleston, South Carolina, where, at Duke Goodman's shop, they were confronted by two men: one, an old acquaintance, Captain James C. Martindale, and the other, Mr. Benjamin Hammet, the son of the late

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<sup>17</sup> Sellers, 200-1.

Rev. William Hammet. This Rev. Hammet, in 1791 – the year of John Wesley’s death – had had enough of Francis Asbury’s heavy-handed leadership, and left the Methodist Episcopal Church to found his own body, which he called The Primitive Methodist Church (no association with the other Primitive Methodist Church founded in England in 1807). Hammet led a church in South Carolina, which left the fold of the MEC, and remained until Hammet’s death in 1803, when the church and whatever was left of the small “Primitive Methodist” movement fizzled out. Lorenzo was opposed to Hammet’s leaving the MEC in the first place, and also was unhappy with Hammet’s general demeanor in leading this church. More will be said about this schism in Part II of this paper.

Back to 1821. The complaint Hammet’s son had with Lorenzo Dow had to do with what he called the libelous reference Dow made in his recently published *Journal*, under an entry dated Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1804:

I rode fifty-two miles, and arrived at Charleston late in the evening; and put up with W. Turpin, Esq., who received me when I first was in this place; and procured me picked meetings at this house; I find Mr. Hammet has gone to a world of spirits, to answer for the deeds done in the body. As it respects his division it appears his motives were impure, arising from a desire of popularity; in consequence of which, there was a breach of confidence by him as respected the incorporation of the house; awful to relate, it appears he died drunk.<sup>18</sup>

The men demanded that Dow sign a retraction to be circulated wherever the *Journal* had gone, which he refused to do. Dow was placed under one thousand dollars bail to appear before the court in May. Dow was able to provide half of this sum, but Lucy left him for her home in Montville, CT.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sellers, 205-6

<sup>19</sup> Sellers, 206. Also Dow’s *Journal* in Dow, 178-9



Dow seemed to think the trial that May was “fundamentally a conflict between the old-world, aristocratic tyranny of the Southern malcontents and the American spirit of democracy.”<sup>20</sup> Dow’s opponents had hired two of the most eminent members of the bar in the Charleston area, Mr. Samuel Prioleau, and the Attorney-General, Mr. Robert Young Hayne, who later served as state senator from South Carolina and the opponent of Webster in a famous debate. Dow felt as though the trial was inspired by a recent novel, *The Yankee Spy*. Testimony established that, yes, Rev. Hammet had, at times, been “disguised in liquor,” but that did not support Dow’s statement that the man “died drunk.” Dow’s defense was that the information he had received led him to the conclusion that Hammet died in a drunken state, and furthermore, does the Bible commit libel when it states that Noah was drunk, and Adam ate the forbidden fruit? Dow lost the case, however, and was a convicted criminal. He was fined one dollar, and imprisoned for 24 hours – from which sentence he was pardoned by the Governor.<sup>21</sup>

## **Pranks**

Newspapers of the day told of several of Lorenzo’s pranks, which only enhanced his aura as a prophet. One story was set at the Black Horse Inn, where Lorenzo raised the Devil. The landlady was entertaining a gentleman caller – not her husband – while Lorenzo was a guest at the inn, sitting next to the fire. The landlord arrived home earlier than expected, in a drunken state, so the male visitor ran into the back room and hid in a large “hogshead” barrel. She covered his head with a pile of cotton tow and replaced the lid just as the lord of the house entered. “Thunder and potatoes, Mag! Why didn’t you

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<sup>20</sup> Sellers, 207.

<sup>21</sup> Sellers, 208-9.

open the door?” His wife asked him to hush, as Lorenzo Dow was a guest. The landlord recognized the name, “Oh, blood and tobacco! Is it Lorenzo Dow, the man who raises the devil?” Lorenzo informed the drunken man that he would be frightened when he saw Lucifer raised up. The man insisted he would not be frightened, and demanded that Lorenzo raise Old Sam right then and there. Lorenzo took a candle from the table and led the landlord to the back room, where he removed the hogshead lid and lit the cotton tow on fire. The unfortunate lover jumped out through the flames and ran out of the house, still trailing burning tow. The next morning the landlord, now sober, had Dow appear before the magistrate for raising the devil.<sup>22</sup>

On another occasion Dow was about to speak to an assembly of people when a farmer approached him complaining that someone had stolen his ax. He had a good idea who it was but was unable to confront the man. Dow picked up a large stone and walked to the pulpit. He preached his sermon, then picked up the stone and informed the congregation that one of them was a thief – he stole an ax, and Dow was going to bring the judgment of God down upon the thief. Dow turned around three times, and on the third rotation raised his arm as though he would throw the rock. The people were riveted but all noticed that only one man ducked when it looked like the stone would be hurled. Dow told the man to return the stolen ax to its rightful owner, then left town with an enhanced reputation as the Lord’s prophet.

The most famous tale told about Dow was given to us by Dr. Paul Johnson himself. This story is called the Steaks and the Pudding, and is included here in its entirety:

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<sup>22</sup> Sellers, 203-4. Also see Dow, 203.

The celebrated Doctor Johnson, from whom Mr. Dow received the first ideas of that invaluable chemical discovery, the Dow Medicine, tells the following story, on himself and friend:

“At one time while he and an intimate friend were traveling in the north of Scotland they put up for the night at a very indifferent looking house in the highlands. The want of cleanliness was very apparent, so much so as to attract the attention both of the Doctor and of his friend, and to make them curious about what they were to have for supper.

“The friend, in peeping through a crack in the partition, discovered a very dirty looking boy attending to the frying of some beef steaks, and as he leaned over to turn them, noticed him scratching his head, and some unlucky little insects falling from it into the pan. This of course spoiled his appetite for steaks. But wishing to have a pull on the Doctor, said nothing of his discovery till after supper. In the meantime their meal was prepared, consisting of fried steaks and boiled pudding. The Doctor supposing the fried dish the cleanest, ate steaks. The friend, rejoicing in the rig he was going to have on the Doctor, addressing his friend, ‘Well, I don’t envy you your dirty pudding.’ ‘Nor I you, your steaks,’ said the friend. And then, giving a broad laugh, informed the Doctor of the boy scratching his head over the frying pan. This was a damper. The Doctor, who was extremely hard to head, now felt himself fairly beaten, and, walking out of doors, soon made a summary disposition of his supper, then returning, sick and provoked, he called up the boy, and addressing him in a very angry tone, said, ‘Why did you not keep that cap on your head you had on when I came here?’ The poor boy, scratching his head and bursting into tears at the angry look and voice of the Doctor, replied, ‘Why, mammy took it to boil the pudding in.’ The scene now changed. The friend was taken with a violent heaving at the stomach, while the Doctor’s countenance soon changed from frowns to excessive mirth, as he followed his friend to the door, congratulating him upon the luxury of a boiled pudding.”<sup>23</sup>

## Holy Dying?

Lorenzo Dow spent his last years living, not on his own estate, or on a large tract of land on the frontier of America, but in his wife Lucy’s inherited homestead in Montville, CT, north of New London. Dow was a restless man, and in December, 1833,

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<sup>23</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; or the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: containing His Experience and Travels, in Europe and America, up to near His Fiftieth Year. Also, his Polemic Writings, to which is added, The “Journey of Life” by Peggy Dow, Revised and Corrected with Notes. Sixth Edition – Averaging 4000 each.* Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849, 212.

set out for Washington, perhaps on a mission to inform President Andrew Jackson of some conspiracy he had sensed. He arrived in Georgetown, where he resided with a fellow member of the Masonic Order, George W. Haller, a brass founder and tin-plate worker. While there he was seized with sickness and confined to bed. There is no record of his last words, other than ramblings about future appointments, Peggy, a dull pain in his side, his horse, etc. He died there on February 2, 1834, aged 56 years.<sup>24</sup>

His wife, Lucy, enjoyed royalties from the sale of Lorenzo's books. She stayed at her home in Montville and entertained few visitors. Those who came to interview the second wife of the infamous Eccentric Cosmopolite found her disinterested in her husband's fame, and somewhat bitter about his meanderings. When it was determined that Lorenzo's wish was to be buried next to his first wife Peggy in Hebron, Lucy refused, as the expense was too great. She was remembered as a kindly old lady, who died in 1863, and willed her home to the town in order to sell it and build a bridge over Oxoboro Creek.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sellers, 255-6.

<sup>25</sup> Sellers, 257-8.

## CHAPTER 5

### OBSERVATIONS

#### **The Hand-off: Pamphleteering the Next Gen Revival Movement.**

Methodists in the new United States had an advantage, once the Revolutionary War was over: their doctrine seemed more democratic than the doctrine of Divine Election. To suggest that God would choose to save some and damn other appeared elitist to the new Americans. Scoffing at the Puritans was in vogue, and Lorenzo Dow took full advantage of its popularity.

Lorenzo Dow loved to laugh at the straw dog he invented – the ALL-part man. What he means by this is that there are various texts in the Bible that show the Lord calling ALL humans to repentance; Jesus died for ALL. But the Calvinist states that only PART of humanity CAN be saved – no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. This is an apparent contradiction in terms: how can all be the same as part? Hence the derogative name, A-double-L-partism – the belief that God’s gift for all humanity is available to only part of the human race.

Dow got a lot of mileage from this catchy phrase, “A-double-L-partism.” His sermons ridiculed the doctrine of Election, and whenever he was opposed by a Calvinist he pulled out the nomenclature of “A-double-L-partism.”

What follows is a summary of several of the pamphlets Dow made available to his listeners. These pamphlets enhanced his popularity and his purse.

## The Chain of Lorenzo

The first of Dow's polemic writings to appear in his two volume *Works* after his *Journal* was his *Chain*. While making very little sense, Lorenzo's *Chain* is a brilliant piece of propaganda. He advertises his *Chain of Reason* to consist of five links, two hooks and a swivel: Flattery, Atheism, Deism, Universalism, Predestination, Perseverance, Flattery, Because and Despair. In the copy of Dow's Writings used for this paper, *The Chain of Lorenzo* takes up 49 full pages. The catchphrase, "and you cannot deny it," appears throughout the argument, at the conclusion of each point in his argument. For example, his first argument is to attack the "Covenant" for its newness – if it is older than the covenant God made with Adam, then it can't be a new covenant; and you cannot deny it. Then he parries with his All/Part argument – if Christ died for all, then he could not have died for only part of humanity; and you cannot deny it. Next he proves that Universalism leads to Deism, etc. Eventually the Divine Election proponent is guilty of Atheism, and every other form of godlessness. The five links of the chain (Atheism, Deism, Universalism, Predestination and Perseverance) have two hooks, one on each end: Flattery and Despair. The swivel is "Because," as in, "it is so because it is so." So the hook of Flattery at one end leads the reprobate through a chain of circular reasoning that ends only in Despair.<sup>1</sup>

Lorenzo would say it this way: "You can and you can't; you shall and you shan't; you will and you won't; you will be damned if you do and you will be damned if you

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<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; or the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: containing His Experience and Travels, in Europe and America, up to near His Fiftieth Year. Also, his Polemic Writings, to which is added, The "Journey of Life" by Peggy Dow, Revised and Corrected with Notes. Sixth Edition – Averaging 4000 each.* (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 350-398. Also Charles Coleman Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow: The Bearer of the Word*, (New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company, 1928), 269.

don't.”<sup>2</sup> This is the kind of sing-song cliché American churchgoers would love to sink their teeth into.

### The Journey from Babylon to Jerusalem; or The Road to Peace

Millennarians and other “end times” people saw the Christian life in terms of a journey. John Bunyan depicted his Pilgrim’s progress in this way. Here Dow writes a popular piece for the disciple of Christ in an understandable, yet sensational motif. Much of American superstition on the subjects of Heaven and Hell find their expression here.<sup>3</sup>

### Dialogue Between Curious and Singular

Using a Wesleyan Socratic style, Dow contrived a conversational apology for victorious Christian living, which also answered his critics concerning his own mission. He justified preaching without a license and travelling great lengths to refute the notion that only a crazy person would live Dow’s life. He lived his unsettled life to the glory of God.<sup>4</sup>

### Hints on the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Like many Prophecy Teachers today, Lorenzo Dow tried to show, using contemporary numbers such as France’s troop and gun numbers, England’s armament statistics, supposed power of Turkish forces, etc., that the various predictions in Daniel,

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven By Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America*, (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 18. Wigger attributes this jingle to Lorenzo Dow. This ditty appears in his writings, but I cannot show that it was original with him.

<sup>3</sup> Sellers, 270. See Dow, 471-510.

<sup>4</sup> Sellers, 270. See Dow, 511-523.

Ezekiel and Revelation are capable of fulfillment in Dow's lifetime. In fact, those Biblical prophecies are most likely to be fulfilled in Dow's lifetime. The Dragon and the Great Whore are quite likely representations for the Vatican or even Napoleon's pope. Even Pitt, who bewailed the damage to his own nation from war, had a place in Dow's interpretation of prophecy. All churches have their leaders and systems, and participate in the Antichrist.<sup>5</sup>

### A Cry From the Wilderness

Once again Lorenzo Dow attempted to reconcile his preaching with Biblical Prophecy applied in a contemporary setting. The Roman Catholic Church was the bad guy, but was fortified by the "new-fangledism" of the current Methodist church. The old Methodists under Wesley were a force for godliness, but the new Methodists were playing into the hands of Satan. All four directions of the compass combine to show the Lord's rule over the events of history. The east cried out and the west responded. The North and South argued over nullification and other issues. Of course Dow's concern for nullification was the 1832 attempt of South Carolina to declare null and void the interpretation of the Constitution that puts South Carolina's supposed interests in jeopardy.<sup>6</sup>

### Spiritual Songs

Dow included in his two-volume set of Writings six songs that are also part of his larger collection of songs that may appropriately be sung at camp meetings. As was the

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<sup>5</sup> Sellers, 269-70. See Dow, 525-542.

<sup>6</sup> Sellers, 272-3. See Dow, 560-4.



custom of his day, no musical notes were included, so common tunes were employed. These songs were included in a pamphlet that Dow sold. Hugh Bourne purchased this pamphlet from Dow, and included them in his own collection of Gospel Hymns for the Primitive Methodists in England in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

### Defence of Camp Meetings

In his typical “overkill” style, Dow defended the outdoor, protracted meetings that became popular on the frontier, but were held in disdain by the larger churches of the East. His defense went on for twenty pages, but can be summarized thus: since it is every Christian’s duty to promote vital Christianity throughout the earth, and Camp Meetings promote vital Christianity throughout the earth, it is every Christian’s duty to promote Camp Meetings. The fact that Lorenzo was a frequent speaker at these, and that he received a great deal of travelling money and publicity/book sales at these highly-attended events is inconsequential in light of the Lord’s obvious blessing upon these divine appointments.<sup>8</sup>

### **What We Learn From Dow**

Three aspects of Dow’s life are pertinent to the advancement of Methodism and the formation of the Primitive Methodist Church: the itinerant ministry, the relationship between the preacher and the establishment, and the relationship between the preacher and the populace. This writer will present an overview of these three issues, and comment

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<sup>7</sup> Dow, 573-82.

<sup>8</sup> Dow, 583-603.

on Dow's perception of marriage, then close with a summation of Dow's contribution to American Folk Theology and a bulleted list of the components of the Dow Factor.

### Dow the Itinerant

Dow was who he was because of his travels. Why stay home and be a prophet without honor? Asbury may have been the Prophet of the Long Road, but Dow also recognized the power of novelty and exposure to diverse masses. Following the example of Whitefield and Wesley, Lorenzo made his way to all the states and territories of his era, and whenever possible would give out appointments as much as a year in advance,<sup>9</sup> guaranteeing 12 months of anticipation and the certain purchase of books and pamphlets. People had time to read about him in the press, talk about the bills he posted long before his arrival, and his reputation for doing everything possible to keep his appointments gave people confidence to "take off work" and travel far distances for his unique entertainment.<sup>10</sup>

When he first applied for his license to preach, Dow was turned down by his local Methodist authorities; the fashion of the time was for preachers to travel. John Wesley established this custom. None other than Francis Asbury himself pointed to the itinerant minister with its hardships as a proof that Methodism had restored the Apostolic nature of the early church – his own firm resolve to travel permanently, not marry, share the

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<sup>9</sup> Sellers, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Dow laments that some appointments were given out without his consent and "contrary to my orders, so that some of my intentions were frustrated." (page 162 of his Journal).

deprivation of the itinerant preachers was his credential.<sup>11</sup> Travelling “kept the church dominated by young men who, according to a critic in the 1820s, were inexperienced, rustic, wanting in ‘social intercourse,’ and contemptuous of their elder colleagues who had been forced to locate.”<sup>12</sup> This infighting between the older, settled clergy and the younger travelers did not escape Dow’s awareness. He ponders, “perhaps I might have been ordained; ... but if you attempt to travel at large, you will meet with continual opposition from your brethren, (though some approbate you).”<sup>13</sup> So Lorenzo justified his early unlicensed, non-ordained status by claiming to reduce internal strife within Methodism; at the same time he was able to be a hero of the faith by leaving all to “follow Christ.” He wrote “it was trying to my flesh and blood to leave my friends and acquaintance in the north, and wander so many hundred miles among strangers.”<sup>14</sup> With Sellers we wonder “what drove Lorenzo to travel? Innate wanderlust of America? Childhood speculations on the lands and people beyond where the sun sets?”<sup>15</sup> Most likely a combination – he wanted the notoriety of seeing and being seen by the world, and the local Methodists would not lay hands on him at first. He was “called to the service of God. Inward voices confirmed it.”<sup>16</sup> But he does not bear the cross in silence – at least his journal hears his whine: “I have a bad cough, ... I feel unwell ... have had but very few rest-days for seventeen months; but have generally preached two to five times a day,

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<sup>11</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) 83. Asbury’s second proof that the “Methodists had restored an episcopate that was genuinely apostolic” was the “bishop’s firm resolve to travel permanently ... to share the deprivation of the itinerant preachers”.

<sup>12</sup> Hatch, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Dow, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Dow, 117.

<sup>15</sup> Sellers, 41

<sup>16</sup> Sellers, 41.

riding from thirty to fifty miles.”<sup>17</sup> We cannot be too hard on Lorenzo, though: John and Charles Wesley had already established the legitimacy of the suffering servant motif in their own Journals.<sup>18</sup> The laborer must earn the hire of which he is worthy – “I spoke at Charity Chapel preparatory for camp-meeting. We had a shout; two found peace.”<sup>19</sup>

One must conclude that Dow knew to take off before the heat came on, and when he could not avoid direct controversy, he had a tendency to bail for other parts of the continent, or even a different continent. He attempted a foray into Canada right around the time of his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday (a prophet had declared Dow would not live past this age),<sup>20</sup> hopped a boat to Ireland (“without permission”),<sup>21</sup> and made his way to Ireland – “ever, there was the inscrutable voice of the Holy Spirit within, urging him on.”<sup>22</sup> The Holy Spirit seemed to sense when Lorenzo had backed himself into a corner. Lorenzo’s time in Ireland was soothed by the great enabler, Dr. Paul Johnson, of “Family Medicine” fame. Johnson and his wife took Lorenzo under their wings and provided for his itinerancy throughout much of Ireland, and later, England. When Lorenzo felt the anxiety of controversy too intensely, the Holy Spirit led him to head back to the United States, particularly sparsely-populated Georgia. Dow discerned the spirits thus: “the devil can show light but not love. When I feel an uncommon impression to do such and such things, if when I resist them it brings a burthen, and when I cherish them it brings love, I generally prosper in following it.”<sup>23</sup> Hope Hull advised him, “though it appears that

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<sup>17</sup> Dow, 146.

<sup>18</sup> This “faithful bearer of the cross” appears throughout the Wesley journals – sickness is almost a prerequisite for the itinerant.

<sup>19</sup> Dow, 146.

<sup>20</sup> Sellers, 52.

<sup>21</sup> Sellers, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Sellers, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Sellers, 51.

Providence hath been kind to you, yet you will not always find Dr. Johnsons in your travels.” Remarkably Dow was aided everywhere he travelled by the open-handed hospitality of the common people.<sup>24</sup> During his first and second overseas trips Lorenzo fanned the flames of American revival by presenting the possibilities of Camp-meetings to the British, who were even more scandalized by the concept than were the American authorities; but a couple Ranters were intrigued by the idea of meeting for extended prayer and preaching. He had 3,000 handbills printed extolling the virtues of camp meetings, but in the spring of 1801 he decided to return to America seemingly without remarkable accomplishment, but much illness. On the boat he musters enough health to vow to travel the continent of America at large.<sup>25</sup> The young nation was large; exploration was exciting; young men were going west. Itinerant ministry took a toll on Lorenzo.

Here in the US, the Primitive Methodist Church of today prides itself on a mobile clergy. This is our way of saying we pastor a church until a problem arises, then we feel called to move on. If we could stop funding U-Haul and instead see ourselves as mobilized into our local neighborhood, the “travelling preacher” motif could prove to be an advantage. We settle in our parsonages for a year or two, then sneak away to another parsonage for another stint. The bunker mentality does not grow churches, even those placed in cities with needy and hurting people all around. We can advance into our home towns. Lorenzo Dow moved around too much to establish a beach-head. He was an itinerant but not a pastor.

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<sup>24</sup> Sellers, 64-65.

<sup>25</sup> Sellers, 61.

Dow's pamphlet "On the Ministry" is a defense of the call of the individual pastor and/or preacher in the face of ecclesiastical hierarchy that would thwart the preaching of the gospel by unsanctioned men who were called by God to go into all the world.<sup>26</sup> No one person can judge if it is one person's duty to preach.

### Dow and the Establishment

A key component of the Lorenzo Dow Factor is for the traveler to have the courage to defy the powers that be just long enough to prove them wrong, then jump onto the Orthodoxy wagon. It had to bother the Methodists that Dow was so much more popular than the regular clergy. As shown above, Dow's ability to waltz into town, dazzle the crowds, then leave with a promise to be back same time next year, only added to his notoriety and nationwide fame. If Lorenzo had settled into a parish ministry he could never have been a success. The Methodists did not see this. To them Dow was a pestilent force like locusts, regularly stirring up trouble then leaving for the next village. Their argument over his "vexatious combination of disobedience and ministerial success" kept Dow's name and the attached fame before the attention of all the Connecticut Methodists.<sup>27</sup>

Methodism never thrived in New England as it did elsewhere in the growing United States. A rift formed between the "high-toned" clergy and the itinerants.<sup>28</sup> When the young Lorenzo Dow presented himself before the September Methodist Conference

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<sup>26</sup> Sellers, 274. See Dow, 559.

<sup>27</sup> Sellers, 72.

<sup>28</sup> Sellers, 27.

he passed the Bishop's examination for license, but a nemesis, Nicholas Snethen, advised that he be restricted to the area around his home in Coventry. He seemed to have been granted "Supernumerary" status – fancy for "we got no use for dis guy." Lorenzo ignored this ruling and hit the road. His arrival at various towns confirmed his disregard for the proper rules – everyone knew Dow was stepping outside the prescribed bounds – but when Snethen warned him that Jesse Lee, the presiding Elder, knew what Dow was up to, Lorenzo claimed it was not the elder's right to determine any other man's course. Dow began his life-long polemical war on Calvinism, leaving off any criticism of the Methodist leaders, and used his dreams as his itinerary. He appeared to have not a care for the Elder's disapproval or Nicholas Snethen's opposition.<sup>29</sup>

Lorenzo's backers suggested to him that he gather letters of recommendation to outweigh the decision of the Methodist Conference, which had sent him home a fourth time. In a dream Dow was led to denounce the Methodists altogether and leave, or go completely insane. He chose the second option – frantically going from house to house scrounging up personal converts, earning him the nickname, "Crazy Dow." The reports of conversion reached the top, and though Dow expected to be rejected again, at the next Conference he received his preaching license.<sup>30</sup>

Dow's eccentricity did not sit well with all Conferences. In New York Lorenzo was "conversed over" and some desired to do what they could to block his itinerant ministry. When it was protested that Dow did send his converts to them – they received the fruits of his labor – the rebuttal was, "perhaps fifty Dows might spring out of the

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<sup>29</sup> Sellers, 46-47.

<sup>30</sup> Sellers, 48.

same nest.”<sup>31</sup> Several preachers from the south however spoke up for Dow’s success among them, causing the views of the New York Conference to be altered. The threat to be expelled from the Connection altogether loomed over Dow’s head, but he figured, since he was never “in” how could he be ruled “out”? He was never a member of the quarterly conference,<sup>32</sup> so his efforts to hold himself separate were justified, but while he was overseas a rule was added to the Discipline requiring that every preacher should meet in class or forfeit his license. How could an itinerant who is in Georgia one month and Boston the next meet in a class? He was admitted on trial and had never been in full connection – does the forfeiture of this license/credential have any meaning to an itinerant known as “Crazy Dow?”<sup>33</sup> Dow chose to “do right, if other people do wrong, and the best way that ever I found to kill an enemy, was to love him to death.”<sup>34</sup> Dow strategically attended their meeting after the vote, so considered his hands “not tied.”<sup>35</sup>

Dow scandalized the leaders of Methodism with the release of his tract “On Church Government” in which he claims that “Almost every society have their *Democratic Pope* – striving to tyrannize and keep others in *fear and dread*.”<sup>36</sup> He released this while going through his land crisis in Wisconsin, and perhaps felt society’s rules were undermining his attempt to raise up an earthly Jerusalem for those tyrannized by ecclesiastical popes.

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<sup>31</sup> Dow, 145.

<sup>32</sup> The Quarterly Conference was the sitting of the itinerant preachers to determine the polity of the Connection. Only the itinerating pastors were members of this governing body.

<sup>33</sup> Dow, 109.

<sup>34</sup> Dow, 110-111.

<sup>35</sup> Dow, 112.

<sup>36</sup> Sellers, 271. See also Dow, 543-58.



An uneasy tolerance existed between Dow and the Methodist leaders.<sup>37</sup> Jesse Lee came to his rescue now and then, and Bishop Francis Asbury offered support, and recommended Dow as a Conference speaker.<sup>38</sup> Jesse Lee offered to publish advertisement of Dow's preaching in the market, but New England Methodists were not comfortable with "Crazy" Lorenzo Dow.<sup>39</sup> He countered with three evidences by which one may be able to determine the duty of another to preach: Divine evidence in his soul; fruits of his labor, and the witness of his word with power.<sup>40</sup> Dow considered his disregard of the leadership and their discomfort over his preaching to be second to the Holy Spirit's evidence manifest in his labor. His conclusion: it is better to obey God than men. Sadly over the years a change took place in Lorenzo. Though exaggerated by the Methodists, Lorenzo's zeal and conversion faith waned as his common fame rose. He was becoming the "Eccentric Cosmopolite."<sup>41</sup>

### Dow's Popularity

Dow was committed to the life of an itinerant. This brought him fame, if not familiarity. Not remaining long in one place allowed impressions to remain as they were first "impressed," without any development that time makes possible. His popularity was also related to his "bad boy" defiance of those in authority.

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<sup>37</sup> Dow, 130.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop Asbury – Francis Asbury was sent as a missionary to America by John Wesley in 1770. When it became clear that the Methodists in America would separate, John Wesley commissioned two ordained men to come to Baltimore in 1784 to ordain Francis as a Superintendent. Asbury took the title Bishop. This sparked Wesley's famed "Dear Franky" letter questioning the seeming arrogance of such a high title.

<sup>39</sup> Dow, 145.

<sup>40</sup> Dow, 396.

<sup>41</sup> Sellers, 70.

So what was the nature of the popularity Dow enjoyed at first? Is there a way we can capitalize on this today? As enviable as fame is, familiarity would be a more attractive goal for us. Establishing ourselves in a neighborhood as committed neighbors is more to be desired than the fame Lorenzo experienced in the first two decades of his ministry.

Nevertheless there are aspects of popularity that make up the Lorenzo Dow Factor in the church today. Jonathan Edwards was right, but Lorenzo Dow was heard. A hearing is what we need today.

Dow knew how to move a crowd. His flagrant originality brought him into prominence as he moved from place to place.<sup>42</sup> Large crowds came to see the “new curiosity.”<sup>43</sup> When the spectacle was over, Dow knew how to follow through on his stroke by passing out a pamphlet, such as his *Rules for Holy Living*. Dow possessed a homespun notoriety which he was able to maintain throughout his career, even when the populace grew weary of him.<sup>44</sup> After one of his trips to Europe Dow rebuilt his reputation by attacking the “sham” of the established church – he knew the difference between praying and saying prayers.<sup>45</sup> Praying was more democratic and demonstrative, and appreciated by those subject to the loneliness and perils of the frontier. The established church could not sustain the novelty craved by the American Frontiersman.

Dow stimulated the imagination in a way favorable to highly emotional religion, and only such excitements could replace the uproarious western frolics which the devout

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<sup>42</sup> Sellers, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Sellers, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Sellers, 126.

<sup>45</sup> Sellers, 113.

must renounce.<sup>46</sup> Like our modern “clubbing” culture, early Americans demanded transcendence above the mundane and ordinary – a getaway from the chronic stress of daily life. Lorenzo’s wanderings rubbed into him an intimate knowledge of man’s “ever-credulous soul” and by using this knowledge he attained power through his “oratorical deftness.”<sup>47</sup> Multitudes of Americans considered him their spiritual father and example (several parents named their sons after him), and showered Lorenzo with the loyalty of grateful subjects.<sup>48</sup> His “willingness to cater to the religious appetites of the ignorant, the taint of the vulgar popularity, brought upon him the thorough disfavor of men of greater cultural pretensions,” and this disfavor only increased Dow’s popularity.<sup>49</sup>

But it was the actual preaching of Hibbard, Garrettson, and Dow rather than the sparring with Beecher that was so powerfully effective. In his memoirs, written in the 1850s, Samuel Goodrich, the publisher of Boston’s first daily newspaper, recalled the terrific stir that Dow created when he invaded a parish in Ridgefield, CT, where Goodrich’s father served as minister:

Lorenzo was not only uncouth in his person and appearance, but his voice was harsh, his action hard and rectangular. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a person more entirely destitute of all natural eloquence. But he understood common life, and especially vulgar life – its tastes, prejudices, and weaknesses; and he possessed a cunning knack of adapting his discourses to such audiences.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sellers, 75.

<sup>47</sup> Sellers, 124.

<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the most famous being Brigham Young’s brother, Lorenzo Dow Young. See Hatch, 121-122.

<sup>49</sup> Sellers, 124.

<sup>50</sup> Hatch, 20. Hatch notes, “in light of Beecher’s and Dwight’s ideal that the clergy should be known for their decorum, respectability, and refined presence, it is noteworthy that Goodrich concludes that Lorenzo Dow ‘had begun to be talked about chiefly on account of his eccentricities.’” From Samuel Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: no publishing data, 1856), 1:205.

Charles Sellers compares Lorenzo's public acceptance with the acceptance of William Miller's computation of the date of the Judgment Day, Joseph Smith's translation of the golden plates by means of golden spectacles, Jemima Wilkinson's dead body being reanimated by the spirit of Christ to preach His gospel, or Shaker missionaries preaching that the Second Appearing had at last been consummated in the birth and ministry of Ann Lee.<sup>51</sup> As Rice points out, "No preachers less qualified, and none more confident."<sup>52</sup>

Dow presents a lengthy tract in his two-volume *Writings* that addresses this issue – his *Analects Upon the Rights of Man*. In this tract he upholds the Natural Law which establishes the equality of all men. Opposed to this is the Right of Kings, which he traces back to Adam as the defiance of Godliness inherent in all ambitious rulers. Starting with Luther and tracing through William Penn, Dow shows the development of liberty and shows the follies of Aristocracy over against the wisdom of Democracy. Dow closes this with an argument for the wisdom of a punishment system that would reform the criminal and deter others.<sup>53</sup>

There is a godly confidence that is demanded by those who claim to be the church's janitorial crew – those who pick up the souls left behind by the Evangelical Awakenings of modern life. Genteel Christians would call it arrogance, but in God's economy the leather belt and camel skin, the diet of locusts and wild honey has an attraction for those lost souls who can never be made to feel welcome among the clean

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<sup>51</sup> Sellers, 127.

<sup>52</sup> Hatch, 21, note #16 contains the Rice quote.

<sup>53</sup> Sellers, 270-1. See also Dow, 419-70.

believers. Can evangelicals recapture this confidence, or will we be absorbed into better-bred denominations?<sup>54</sup>

### Dow on Marriage

While not directly pertinent to a study of Dow's influence on the individuals responsible for the advancement of Methodism or the birth of the Primitive Methodist Church, we have to believe that a person's perception of the marriage state has bearing on his or her relationship to the Lord's church. Dow included in his journal and other writings some of his opinions and even actions in the realm of marriage. Dow's account of his own marriage is certainly brief in the retelling, and some of that sparseness can be accounted for by remembering that marriage was considered to be a delight, and of course, an itinerant missionary had to be careful not to tie himself to a home and a wife, so Lorenzo most likely felt internal pressure to understate his desire for the warmth of hearth and home. Dow records in his journal that he advised another couple contemplating marriage that "many persons desire a thing, and wish that it might be the will of god [sic] it should be so, and from thence reason themselves into a belief that it is his will, when in fact it is nothing but their own will, substituted for God's, and so stand in their own light and deceive themselves."<sup>55</sup> The man seeking advice from Dow desired marriage; the woman he desired to marry did not agree that this was God's will. Dow throws a wet blanket on the man's plans to marry. Was Dow addressing his own misgivings concerning marriage: the conflict between human desire for companionship

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<sup>54</sup> Or dissolve altogether!

<sup>55</sup> Dow, 151.

and the demand of the itinerant to be free from home ties? Next Dow in his journal debated with himself over the common belief that all matches are appointed by God, which Dow concluded is contrary to common sense. During courtship both parties “put the best foot foremost, and the best side out,” to appear most attractive to a potential spouse, but this leads to the problem of true natures being revealed after the knot is tied, laying a foundation for unhappiness for life. If we cannot pray for God’s blessing on our marriage, it is “forbidden fruit.”<sup>56</sup>

Dow’s first wife Peggy seemed overly compliant with her “crazy” husband, Lorenzo. When commenting on an itinerant whose wife left him (because of his constant travelling), Dow mentions J.W. (John Wesley) and George Whitefield,<sup>57</sup> who had similar wives, “but those ... men stuck to the world, and God blessed them in it until those objects (their wives? their marriages?) were removed out of the way. And if a man is faithful in the way of duty, and those beings who act thus are removed and taken away, how can one in conscience and in truth call it a ‘loss?’”<sup>58</sup> He glorifies faithfulness to the Lord over the vows of marriage: “And those men whom God has moved by his Spirit, and called to preach the Gospel, how can they feel when under petticoat government so far as to desert the work?”<sup>59</sup> This sentiment would not sit well today. Men of God who honor the marriage vow would consider it an insult to be accused of being under “petticoat government.” As times change, our values and perception of obedience change.

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<sup>56</sup> Dow, 151.

<sup>57</sup> George Whitefield’s marriage seemed a delight even though he travelled extensively; Wesley’s was a disaster, perhaps encouraging him to travel more extensively. Wesley was miles away from home when he learned of his wife’s demise.

<sup>58</sup> Dow, 211.

<sup>59</sup> Dow, 211, footnote.

This is the pathology of the historian pastor: We want to be like our forebears – we long for the church growth they claim to have experienced. We try to emulate those who have gone before. They defied the powers that be, and found that crowds of people appreciated that. They did church in an unorthodox way and people joined the movement. They preached and sang in a robust, gutsy way and those who desired a more “bad boy” religion flocked to hear, see, and unite with them. They treated their wives like add-ons, and patted themselves on their backs for having a lousy marriage like St. John Wesley.<sup>60</sup>

Can evangelicals today make an appeal to our culture without falling into the artificial excesses of those who have gone before us? Can we have a Lorenzo Dow Factor in our ministry and still love our wives? The answer to that question will determine if we want to re-garb ourselves with the robes of primitive Methodism,<sup>61</sup> and re-enter the role of “mopper-upper” for Evangelicalism. Jesus himself spoke of the person who passes up the married state for the sake of the kingdom. Some spouses were designed to marry a person committed to the kingdom and some spouses were not designed that way. Peggy, Dow’s first wife, was a spouse designed for marriage to Lorenzo Dow.<sup>62</sup> The church needs more laborers who can make this kind of commitment. However, this is not for everybody, and it would seem that clergy today need to come to terms with the level of commitment to the body of Christ that is possible and reasonable. Allowing bitterness to spring up and trouble our pastors is not healthy for the church.

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<sup>60</sup> Can we rather emulate the marriage of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards?

<sup>61</sup> Early practices of the people called “Methodists.”

<sup>62</sup> See Peggy’s Vicissitudes, Dow, 605-709.

## Lorenzo Dow's Contribution to American Folk Theology

Lorenzo's arch-nemesis, Nicholas Snethen, was instrumental in a movement Dow warned about in his *Address to the Public*.<sup>63</sup> After a decade of circuit ministry, Snethen decided to marry and leave the itinerancy to serve as a local preacher. Snethen was no average preacher – he served as chaplain of the US House of Representatives in 1811. In the 1820s Snethen organized a reform movement in favor of local preacher rights, which led, ultimately, to the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church – actual a reform movement in reverse, as the local preachers would tend to be more conservative and the itinerants more radical. This uprising of local preachers was seen as a power struggle between the older, settled clergy and the younger, heartier travelling clergy.<sup>64</sup> If Snethen had waited a decade or two, it would have been unnecessary for him to start his own denomination, as the Methodist Episcopal Church by the 1840s would have found itself naturally moving toward a settled clergy. A case can easily be made for this very factor being the cause of our decline today – the younger, robust clergy are encouraged to settle in one parish and take up the long-term cure of souls, rather than moving about radically inspiring the congregations to service in the kingdom. Snethen's plan was a stench in Dow's nostrils. In his Address he complains that the judge constitutes the court – the jurors are deemed unnecessary. And in the church, the traditions are put on equal footing with the Scripture, as the pastor becomes the potentate, with the congregation serving as spectators. He complains that the doctrine of “the benefits of the clergy” is not admissible in the United States, regardless of what is done in other countries such as Spain. Also the teaching of “the corruption of blood” does not hold up in the USA – we have no families

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<sup>63</sup> Dow, 710-2.

<sup>64</sup> Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 86, and page 268, Chapter 4, note 70.



of nobility to be kept pure. Rather we place in office, in government or in the church, the person who is qualified, not the person with a certain bloodline or documentation.<sup>65</sup>

While America may no longer act as it has in the past, and the American Church is no longer what it started out to be, Lorenzo Dow represents the “original American citizen” in both government and church. We have altered “folk theology” to be settled and staid, but in the beginning it was not so.

### Components of the Dow Factor

So it is time to summarize the Dow Factor. We would have to say the DNA Dow would inject into today’s church would include:

- A robust individualism that demands commitment from hearers
- A commitment to self-study over exclusively institutional devotion
- A willingness to travel, presenting newness to each audience
- A healthy disregard for the leaders who want to promote settledness
- A discerning command and stewardship of the popular throng
- A flexible understanding with the spouse, so that the parsonage is a base of operation, rather than a bastion of groundedness.

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<sup>65</sup> Dow, 710-12. Lorenzo’s Address seems to be one of his later additions to his Writings, suggesting that he is indeed responding to the trend of the 1820s. Or perhaps he is writing in the first decade of the 1800s and can see into the future.

## PART II

### DOW'S METHODIST CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

What is the “Lorenzo Dow Factor?” For the evangelist, there is an audacity of obedience to the CALL – a gospel rebelliousness – that moves the evangelist away from the shelter of the established cozy church into the frontier of lost souls. Some would call it arrogance or eccentricity. To maintain devotion to the Good News of the Gospel, the preacher must refuse to know his place in the hierarchy, and he must raise up a church of followers who simply will not acknowledge their betters. Social grace and conformity to norms can distract from the mission – the flow of obedience. Lorenzo Dow was a master of this bold independence.

How is this important to small denominations like the Primitive Methodist Church? Faithfulness; Synergy; Revival; Wesleyan Quadrilateral; Church Growth – these are the buzz words that have driven our efforts to snap out of decline. Yes, our small denomination is in decline. Like the Boy Scouts, Lions, Grange, 4H, League of Women Voters, NAACP, Masons and just about every other civic organization, or even the traditional church, since 1960 we have seen steady decline in membership as our churches hemorrhage people.<sup>1</sup> Some go to First Baptist and some to the emerging church, and some drop out of church altogether. To meet this problem we have been subjected to so many outreach and Church Growth programs that we cannot differentiate between biblical faithfulness and programmatic over-commitment. We have poured money into

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 55. In this social study, Putnam notes that “Once we bowled in leagues,” but now we bowl alone. Because we do not appreciate the personal need for civic organizations or churches, we “drop out.” Putnam contends that when organizations once again prove their worth, individuals will come back.

leadership development. Our people have been assessed; our pastors have been trained; and we are not saved. We have ridden the worship waves, taught our teens to play guitar, sold organs on eBay, and even purchased Hawaiian Shirts, but the numbers decline every year. When we close a church and sell the building, the money is used for further training and hiring young church planters – ecclesiastical cannibalism. Each year we pray and long for Revival. We humble ourselves, pump ourselves up, criticize, overlook, cajole, inspire, beg, and choose not to judge, but our churches fail to bring in even the children of members, much less fresh meat. We have changed our name, changed our discipline, pined about the good old days, embraced the present, anticipated the future, and brought in speakers. In the midst of this, we talk up the simplicity of the ‘primitive’ church. Like other churches, we compete for the 13-17% of Americans who attend church on any given week, but we fail to do what we used to do well: bring to the Lord those who have never darkened a church doorstep.<sup>2</sup> We no longer rebel against low expectations. We have contemplated doing hard things and, to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, Evangelism has been found difficult and left untried.

Something is missing. The historians among us point to the missionary spirit of our founders, Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. If we only had their zeal and faithfulness to the gospel, we would be like the first Ranters in jolly ol’ England.<sup>3</sup> Was it simply zeal that attracted the masses to the lowest rung of the gospel ladder? Was there something more?

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<sup>2</sup> David T. Olson, “The State of the American Church – 2008,” [www.TheAmericanChurch.org](http://www.TheAmericanChurch.org), (accessed February 1, 2015.)

<sup>3</sup> “Ranter” is the pejorative term that the early Primitive Methodists embraced when town-folk ridiculed their tendency to make a lot of noise before and during meetings. The “noise” that constituted the ranting was the loud singing for which Free Gospellers, Revivalists and Primitive Methodists were known.

There are so many good churches out there – should we just close up shop and join up with the thriving churches in town? Is there ministry for the PMC today? For other small denominations in the Methodist tradition?

In this second section of this paper, early Methodism in England (Chapter six) and the United States (Chapter seven) will be examined to see if there is a DNA issue that we are neglecting today. Chapter eight will consider the interplay between continents as the evangelist moves back and forth between England and America. Then those early fans of Lorenzo Dow in the midlands of England – the first Primitive Methodists – will be subjected to scrutiny in an effort to determine what motivated them to separate from the Wesleyans and send out missionaries throughout central England, to eventually build a strong Primitive Methodist movement. How did Dow, in the midst of dodging arrest by the Immigration and Naturalization Services of his day, manage to “inject the DNA of Revival” into these untrained men and women? Can we cultivate a similar serum to inject into a dying host today? Can the Lorenzo Dow factor change us back into Revivalists?

## CHAPTER 6

### BRITISH METHODISM

Revival is our only interest; Revival and Reform. Walter Kaiser helps us understand the difference:

Now a reformation must not be confused with a revival. Reform may begin when God's Word forms the basis for all action, thinking, and living. It leads to a time of moral living and righteousness in the land. But revival begins in the heart and leads to deep contrition and repentance for sin, with a willingness to change, make restitution, and live differently from that time forward.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly we are praying for both revival and reform – we want heart change, with its contrition, repentance and steps toward living differently, but we also want people to be disciplined in God's Word, so there can be a basis upon which to construct one's life. We want soft, contrite hearts and firm, biblical minds.

It would seem that one would feed the other: reformation of life based on God's Word would lead to repentance, and revival begun in the heart would render one desirous of biblical and Holy Spirit guidance. Sadly our history resembles that of the children of Israel in the book of Judges and the writings of Samuel and the books of Kings – revival and reform do not last long. "Periods of spiritual decline occur in history because the gravity of indwelling sin keeps pulling believers first into formal religion and then in open apostasy."<sup>2</sup>

So, because of the human condition (original sin/indwelling sin) we will always need revival of heart and reformation of mind. This constant need gives us the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Kaiser, *Revive us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today*, (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Geanies House, 2003), 90.

<sup>2</sup> Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 40.

the “cycle of life and death,” wherein we find ourselves feeling close to the Lord, then shortly after sensing ourselves to be far from Him. Ideally, taking the gravity of sin into consideration, the backsliding church will find itself a ‘two steps forward-one step back’ gait where there is a net gain of forward progress, though it is alarmingly slow and often disappointing in the short-term. At other times for both individuals and whole churches the forward progress is seemingly wiped out in its entirety. Lorenzo Dow himself started out his ministry as a thundering influence among the churches of America, Canada, Ireland and England, but because of age and some severe setbacks he came to the end of his life a bitter, ineffective man. Only the fruit of his labors remained. Lorenzo Dow started out like Wesley himself, whose preaching “scared people out of their wits” even though his style was “calm, earnest and sincere.”<sup>3</sup> Wesley’s empire seemingly crumbled as he approached his last days on earth. The church he was instrumental in founding also experienced spiritual “hardening of the arteries.”

Evangelists like Dow bring individual revival, and enough revived people in one place will cluster themselves into churches like the Methodist Church or one of its iterations. We notice the negative disappointments, but a movement is begun.

The subject of this section is Dow’s audience – those of his listeners who wanted and experienced revival. We will see first how Dow was so effective in raising up not only individual believers in and outside the Methodist Church, but also whole churches as off-shoots of Methodism. Unfortunately in so many cases, these robust bodies of

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 105. Jonathan Edwards was also calm, but his modern reputation seems based on the second presentation of his *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* sermon at Enfield, Connecticut. Listeners cried out for mercy.

believers became hard-set into formal religious practices, with the result that they were forced by the obesity of their own immobility to merge with others or die off altogether.

Of course, the Methodist Church is not the only expression of ecclesiology worthy of our examination, nor is Methodism Dow's only field of influence. Also, Lorenzo Dow is not the only itinerant who deserves to have his story told two centuries later. Dow and the Methodist bodies over which he held influence occupy our discussion because both the man and the movement so obviously reflect the principles of revival and reform that may be of help to evangelical churches today. The church needs to know how the Lord used Lorenzo Dow and the Methodist bodies after the death of John Wesley. Our generation is where we are ecclesiologically because of the revival movement of the early nineteenth century.

In this chapter on British forms of Methodism, and in the next on American forms, this work will summarize Wesley's legacy to the evangelical world. At times this will be confusing as, in the UK and US, distinct denominations used the same or similar names for related or unrelated bodies. Some Methodist bodies existed in only Europe or America, and others sent out tentacles across the ocean, and then cut the connecting vine, leaving two churches to grow independently of one another. This author will attempt to present this material clearly, but the reader must try to remember the two distinct nations.<sup>4</sup>

The bodies of Methodism are further enhanced and complicated by the influence of preachers like Lorenzo Dow who were home-grown, but bounced back and forth

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<sup>4</sup> This could be further confused by considering British missions to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Several of these missions also became independent from the mother church.



across the Atlantic, and the fact that parent bodies in England gave birth to American bodies that may have lost the family resemblance.

### **Dow's List**

In the last 'diary' chapter of Dow's published Journal, Dow sums up his second voyage to England.<sup>5</sup> As part of that summary he lists the six forms of Methodism in England: 1. Old Society; 2. Kilhamites; 3. Quaker Methodists; 4. Whitefield's Methodists; 5. Revivalists, or Free Gospellers; 6. Welch Methodists, called jumpers, a happy, plain, pious people, by the best accounts; besides the Church Methodists.<sup>6</sup>

### The Wesleyan Methodist Church

*Church Methodists* and *Old Society Methodists* – if no other body of Methodism ever left home to form its own independent household, the Methodist Church in England would still be a complex animal due to John Wesley's insistence that the Methodist Connexion was originally formed in order to be a reforming and reviving influence within the Church of England.<sup>7</sup> John Wesley died a "Church Methodist" and his intellectual circle of friends maintained his commitment to staying in the Church of England. Not all of Wesley's pastors were ordained – most were not – but were simply

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<sup>5</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite: or, The Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: Containing His Experience and Travels, in Europe and America, Up to Near His Fiftieth Year. Also His Polemic Writings, to which is added "The Journey of Life" by Peggy Dow*, Sixth Edition, (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin and Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 304-49. This summary is at the end of chapter 19 in Dow's journal. As explained elsewhere in this paper, Dow stops recording his daily activities, and chapters 20-22 contain Dow's justification of his eccentricity, and offer his side of several controversies and even lawsuits. Chapter 19 ends in 1807, before Dow's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, but chapters 20-22 cover events up to fourteen years later, then stop before the death of his first wife, Peggy, and his remarriage to Lucy less than three months later.

<sup>6</sup> Dow, 301.

<sup>7</sup> "Connexion," pronounced like "connection," is the term Wesley used for his Methodists, to emphasize that they were not a separate church, but were a society within the Church of England.

laymen called to preach. His ordained pastors were ordained within the Church of England and participated in the sacrament and service of the state church.<sup>8</sup> Wesley began his ministry as an Anglican, and attempted to hold up the charade of inclusion well past his “The World is My Parish” stage.<sup>9</sup> By the 1770s it was becoming difficult for Wesley to keep up the rhetoric, especially as Methodism moved into the American colonies, and of course, after the Revolution. After Wesley’s death in 1791, however, the Church Methodists died out or were absorbed into Lady Selena, Countess of Huntingdon’s societies, as loyal Anglicans stopped affiliating with the Methodist Society, or those loyal to the Society simply stopped attending the sacrament at the Church of England. As Wesley grew weaker in the 1780s the Societies became bolder about scheduling their meetings during the times of the services of the Anglican Church. Wesley could no longer forbid this practice, particularly since he had ordained “superintendents” for the Methodists in America in 1784.<sup>10</sup>

The Methodism that remained as the Wesleyan flagship was the Old Society, or Wesleyan Methodists. This is the group of societies that Wesley bequeathed to his 100

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<sup>8</sup> W.J. Townsend, H.B. Workman, George Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism*, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, Volume I), 385. The Church Methodists (devoted to the Church of England) would have remained strong for some time, except that after the death of John Wesley Methodists were denied access to the communion table in Anglican churches. The Church Methodists strongly insisted on commemorating the Lord’s death, and demanded that their pastors be authorized to oversee the Eucharist. This was granted in 1795 by the Conference’s Plan of Pacification, resulting in the eventual evolution of Church Methodists into the main body of Wesleyan Methodists.

<sup>9</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition*, Volume 1, Journals from October 14, 1735 to November 29, 1745, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 200-1. After receiving a “pressing letter from London,” Wesley feels he must respond justifying his itinerant preaching when Anglican priests were assumed to “settle down in a parish ministry.” His statement, “I look upon all the world as my parish,” has become the mission statement of many an evangelist.

<sup>10</sup> Wesley, *Works*, Vol. IV, 288, “Wed. September 1 – Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, and appointed Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey to go and serve the desolate sheep in America.” He appointed them as Superintendents, and charged them to ordain Francis Asbury, already in America, to superintend the flock of America as well.

preachers, and left in the care of his Seven Trustees.<sup>11</sup> After 1791 the tie with Anglicanism was acknowledged to be severed, and the societies offered the sacraments and worship times of a real church. The Wesleyan Methodists became the guardian of the status quo, and these are the churches and leaders that gave Lorenzo Dow the most opposition while he travelled around the British Isles.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, while the Old Society/Methodist Church was doing all it could to appear legitimate in the eyes of the monarchy and Parliament, it was men like Adam Clarke who gave a touch of class to the pastors and members of Wesley's Methodist Church. Pastoral training and member care became more "scholarly" as Clarke released his massive Commentary on Scripture and his Systematic Theology.<sup>12</sup> Jesse Lee and other leaders who were Oxford men did their part to raise the reputation of Wesley's legacy to the nation. Methodism became focused more on Reformation than Revival.

### Kilhamites – Methodist New Connexion

The first true split from John Wesley's Methodism came from Alexander Kilham in 1795, four years after Wesley's death.<sup>13</sup> The issue was the association with the Church

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<sup>11</sup> The Wesley Center Online, Chapter XVIII – *Setting His House in Order*, [www.thewesleycenteronline.com](http://www.thewesleycenteronline.com), (accessed January 15, 2015). John Wesley registered his Poll Deed on February 28, 1784, in which he defined The Conference of the People Called Methodists, and announced the 100 preachers who would together exercise the roll Wesley had for the previous 40 years. Wesley's Journal for that date makes no mention of registering the Poll Deed.

<sup>12</sup> Dow records in his Journal that Adam Clarke saw him willingly and received him. Dr. Thomas Coke, back in London, was not so cordial. Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite: or the Writings of Lorenzo Dow*, (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson, 1849), 263.

<sup>13</sup> 'True split' refers to a group of Methodists leaving the parent body. The formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America will not be considered a 'split' in this paper, but rather an evolution. Likewise the division between Wesley and Whitefield was so early and fundamental that the definition of 'split' does not seem appropriate. Kilham's split could also be seen as an evolution, but terms are terms and we need a base for the developing iterations of Methodism – after Wesley's death seems suitable.

of England. Some Methodists insisted that meeting times on Sunday morning not conflict with worship times at Anglican chapels, while others demanded that Methodist worship replace attendance at the Church of England. Also at issue was the Lord's Supper at Methodist Chapels, the authorization of Methodist preachers to offer the Lord's Supper, and then peripheral issues like the authority of Quarterly Meetings. In 1795 the Plan of Pacification outlined the terms of the separation from the Church of England, including authorizing Methodist societies to meet at the same time as their local Anglican chapel, and the possibility of celebrating the Lord's Supper, overseen only by those appointed by the Conference.<sup>14</sup> Other concessions were also granted to the local congregations.<sup>15</sup>

Even these concessions were not enough for Alexander Kilham and others, who were convinced that the Methodists were only pretending to separate from the Established Church. Methodists still depended on the Church of England's local chapel for marriages and the baptism of infants, as well as funerals, which were attended by many other Methodists. Kilham resented this continued dependence on the state church.<sup>16</sup>

Alexander Kilham was born in 1762 in Epworth – John Wesley's "home town." He was trained in the linen weaving trade by his father, who was also a Methodist. Alexander was touched by his reading of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, and when 20 years old was brought to "a sudden change upon my mind" during a revival service at Epworth. He went from house to house to tell of his conversion, and planned the evangelization of neighboring villages. He was asked to be the travelling companion of R.C. Brackenbury,

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<sup>14</sup> Townsend, I, 496. Because of the charge of Sacramentarianism and supposed usurpation of priestly rights, Kilham's followers were maltreated in the streets and called "Tom Paine's Methodists."

<sup>15</sup> Townsend, I, 386-7. Even though the Plan officially separated from the Church of England, and established the United Societies into a distinct church, with its own ministry, ordinances, tests and courts, it was thirty years before the travelling preachers referred to themselves as 'ministers.'

<sup>16</sup> Townsend, I, 387-8.

a renowned Methodist itinerant preacher. In spite of great persecution the two founded Methodism in the Channel Islands. He was ordained in 1792 and was required by law to register as a Dissenting preacher under the Toleration Act. He refused to have his second child baptized in the state church, and began petitioning the Methodists to claim their “gospel privileges” as Englishmen. He demanded a radical change among the societies, especially those still dependent upon the Church of England. He distributed several pamphlets calling for independence for Methodists, and was well-received by many of the older Methodist preachers, but his rhetoric received the censure of the Conference.<sup>17</sup>

Fifty-eight preachers signed Kilham’s petition asking for explanation of the ambiguous phrases in the Plan of Pacification. He felt the Plan did not go far enough, and many agreed with him. Alexander Kilham then drafted a new Constitution which caused him to be expelled from the Newcastle District Meeting and then the Conference. His general principles, which became the Constitution of the Methodist New Connexion, called for more representation by lay members and a vote of the preachers in a district to approve or dismiss preachers, rather than submit to the decision of the single Elder or Superintendent. His painfully direct instances of abuse under the current resulted in his trial at the Conference at Wesley’s Chapel in 1796. The following Conference had several of the preachers contending for many of the reforms Kilham demanded. Compromises were made to the Plan of Pacification, but the main principle of representation was not conceded. In 1797, at Ebenezer Chapel in Leeds, England, Kilham, along with William Thom, Stephen Eversfield and Alexander Cummin and several others, formed ‘The New Itinerancy,’ the Methodist New Connexion.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Townsend, I, 489-93.

<sup>18</sup> Townsend, I, 489-95.

The New Connexion had twice as many members and societies as it had buildings, and those buildings were bogged down in litigation, so the early years were a struggle. Even though the Connexion's charter called for the brewing of Port wine for the communion service, the MNC was joined by the Cornish Free Church in the 1840s after a controversy over teetotalism and the use of wine at communion. Several other churches which belonged to the Wesleyan Union banned teetotalism, so several preachers who had signed the abstinence pledges that were popular in the time, including 111 Primitive Methodists, were drawn to the MNC in an affiliation, in 1848.<sup>19</sup> The MNC, the Bible Christian Methodists (1826) and the United Methodist Free Churches (1827) joined to become the United Methodist Church (English) in 1907, which joined with the Wesleyan Methodists and the Protestant Methodists in 1932 to become the United Methodist Church of England.<sup>20</sup>

#### Independent, or Quaker Methodists

These believers were not necessarily affiliated with "Quakerism" or the Society of Friends founded by George Fox, but in the eyes of many the resemblance demanded the name – both groups were plain in dress and "still" in worship. Many of their original members had been Friends. They were pacifists and less inclined to promote leadership among their number, so their meetings did resemble Friends' meetings. There were several Quaker Methodists appearing in Dow's memoirs, but the weakness of their organization led to their eventual demise, and adherents melted into other groups or

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<sup>19</sup> Townsend, I, 539-42.

<sup>20</sup> Townsend, I, 486. See also [Methodistheritage.org.uk](http://Methodistheritage.org.uk) website, sponsored by Trustees for Methodist Church, 2013.

ceased to practice independently. Lorenzo Dow shows high favor for Quaker Methodists, perhaps due to the fact that his sponsor, Dr. Paul Johnson, from Ireland, was a Quaker, and promoted the principles of the Friends when he was with Dow. On Saturday, 6 May 1806 Dow preached in one of their chapels at Preston Brook<sup>21</sup> not far from the town of Risley.<sup>22</sup> In both places Dow noted an increase in members since his first visit in 1800.<sup>23</sup>

Lorenzo Dow, who made an attempt to establish his city, Loren, or City of Peace on Sioux land in Wisconsin in 1816, spoke highly of William Penn, during whose life there had never been any war between “Penn’s colony and the Indians” (sic).<sup>24</sup> He devoted two pages of his *Journal* to credit the Quakers with the establishment of the “Act of Toleration” under King William, and the American “Equal Rights of Conscience” principle written into the founding documents of the United States.<sup>25</sup> There is no doubt that Dow liked the Quakers, and the Quaker Methodists. In spite of their considered “oddness” Dow credits both the Quakers and the Quaker Methodists with Christ-like characteristics.

The Quaker Methodists, or Independent Methodists, had their start in 1796, just five years after the death of John Wesley, in the Methodist society at Warrington.<sup>26</sup> Because this town was twenty-five miles from the nearest circuit (Northwich) there was

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<sup>21</sup> Not far from Liverpool

<sup>22</sup> Townsend, I, 568. See also Dow, 263. Dow started the society in Risley, so they referred to themselves as “Dowites.” In his last three *Journal* chapters, as the Eccentric Cosmopolite, Dow claims never to have raised up his own followers – there were no “Dowites.” But he retained close friendship with these believers from Risley, and others in the area of Congleton and Burslem.

<sup>23</sup> Dow, 263.

<sup>24</sup> Dow, 334. He wanted a city laid out exactly like the Philadelphia of his day, as well as a “homeland” for African Americans and Native Americans.

<sup>25</sup> Dow, 336-7.

<sup>26</sup> The Northwich Circuit was the site of much dissent from Wesleyan Methodism – Independent Methodists, Forest Methodists, and the Clowesites and Camp-Meeting Methodists which eventually became the Primitive Methodists.

little contact with other Methodists, and little supervision by the Elders or Superintendents.<sup>27</sup> The Society at Warrington was content to maintain this distance and their independence and little was done to communicate with the district. Because of this independence, though, the society developed its own government and means of edification, which included the holding of cottage meetings similar to the famous Aldersgate Street meeting at which John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" almost sixty years before.<sup>28</sup> In 1796 a directive from the official authorities ordered that, first of all, a Conference man be placed in Warrington – which was not implemented for fifteen years – and secondly, that the cottage meetings cease. This cessation of the cottage meetings was carried out, and all but one of the cottages complied. This cottage received the news that it was no longer considered part of the society, but it continued to meet and provide for its own sustenance and growth.<sup>29</sup>

This cottage-church went without formal organization until 1797, when Peter Phillips – then a nineteen-year-old interested in studying for ministry – discovered from the New Testament that there was no biblical basis for a separate or salaried ministry. Phillips taught the results of his study for a few years, then in 1801 preached his first sermon at the cottage-church. That began over fifty years of preaching the gospel, travelling over thirty thousand miles and preaching over six thousand times. The principles of the Independent, or Quaker Methodists were well received by the hearers, and a sympathy for the cause of Peter Phillips developed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Townsend, I, 558. Also, the Elders and Superintendents were involved in a different battle – with Alexander Kilham and the preachers who became the Methodist New Connexion.

<sup>28</sup> Townsend I, 558.

<sup>29</sup> Townsend I, 558.

<sup>30</sup> Townsend, I, 558-9.



The offshoot of Methodism that Phillips represented drew the admiration of some from the Society of Friends, who appreciated the resemblance of these Independent Methodists with their meetings in their more robust years. These threw in their lot with Phillips and his followers, and an interchange took place: the Methodists developed the plainness of dress and speech of the Friends and the former Quakers learned to sing as heartily as the Methodists. Outsiders combined the two notions and dubbed the group “Quaker Methodists” or “Singing Quakers.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1806 the disconnected societies met together to organize in Manchester, where they took the name officially – Independent Methodists.<sup>32</sup> There were congregations represented at this Conference that were older than the society at Warrington, but the stability of the Warrington group, and the influence of Peter Phillips brought them all to recognize Warrington as the principle center and Phillips as the founder of the group. In 1833 the associated societies agreed to style themselves “The United Churches of Christ.” In 1841 the title “United Free Gospel Churches” was tried, but failed to satisfy. In 1898 the generic name “Independent Methodist Churches” was unanimously resumed.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Townsend, I, 559.

<sup>32</sup> One of the preachers for the Quaker Methodists was James Crawfoot, who associated with the meeting in Warrington and had connection with the “Dowites” in Risley. His monthly meetings in the forest of Delamere earned his followers the names of ‘Magic’ or ‘Forest Methodists.’ He was a mentor of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, and thus instrumental in the development of the Primitive Methodist Church, in addition to his association with the Independent Methodists. More will be said about Crawfoot in the section on Primitive Methodists. See Townsend, I, 567-73.

<sup>33</sup> Townsend, I, 559-60.

Whitefield's Methodists and Welch Methodists (Howell Harris, Calvinist Methodists, Lady H.)<sup>34</sup>

Dow mentions Whitefield's Methodists and Welch Methodists separately, but they will be considered together. That Dow is able to mention this grouping at all is remarkable, as Wesley was the better organizer. Even George Whitefield bemoans his inability to gather his followers into a fold like his colleague Wesley.<sup>35</sup> Dow, like others, uses this designation interchangeably with the Calvinistic Methodists associated with Lady Huntingdon and Howell Harris.

A great revival took place in Wales.<sup>36</sup> This was concurrent with what was happening in England proper under Whitefield and the Wesleys.<sup>37</sup> At the same time an awakening was taking place among the colonies of America, also under the influence of Whitefield, but foremost under Jonathan Edwards, the Tennants and other New Lights. Howell Harris suggested that George Whitefield become the leader of the Welsh

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<sup>34</sup> Townsend I, 269-70.

<sup>35</sup> Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 153. Whitefield could have easily had a viable denomination on both sides of the Atlantic, but for this defect in himself that he mentions. Whitefield was heavily responsible for the revival that Edwards was such a part of in New England. In fact, Whitefield's influence in the South, Central and Northern colonies cannot be overestimated, and one speculates that if Wesley had followed Whitefield the two of them would have generated the Methodist Church in America in the 1740s and 50s long before the Christmas Conference in 1784. In England, Whitefield's influence among the educated men in Lady Huntingdon's circle would prefer to associate with Whitefield rather than Wesley, but even among the common man Whitefield could perhaps have generated enough support to found his own group in addition to Howell Harris's Welsh Methodists.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Morgan, *The Life and Times of Howell Harris*, (London, UK: Holywell: Hughes and Butler, 1852). In addition to the remarkable account of revival in Wales, this book tells the story of Howell Harris and John Cennick's relationship with the Wesleys, and the great divide between the Wesleyan perception of Arminian Free Will and George Whitefield's commitment to the Sovereignty of God and Predestination.

<sup>37</sup> John Wesley was devoted to Free Will – more so than his brother Charles – and refused to compromise with the Particular Election people. Wesley's Arminianism seemed to fit in the new democratic experiment taking place in the United States when the new Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards ran out of steam. The interplay between Free Will and the Doctrines of Grace will be noted in the section of this paper devoted to the cross-pollination between England and America (chapter 8).

Calvinistic Methodists.<sup>38</sup> Whitefield agreed at first, but the disagreement with John Wesley caused him to relinquish that crown of leadership under the aegis that he was needed in America.<sup>39</sup>

Almost from the inception of Methodist societies in 1740 this undercurrent of doctrinal disagreement has demanded that there be two streams of Methodism – one Calvinist and the other, more noticeable stream, a modified Arminianism. By the time of Whitefield's death in Newburyport, MA on 30 September, 1770, Countess Selena and the scholars associated with her seminary at Trevecca had taken sides on the issue: Joseph Benson and John Fletcher withdrew in support of Wesley's Arminianism, and the rest, many associated with the revival in Wales, continued under Lady Huntingdon, Countess Selena's patronage.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the Calvinist Methodist chapels in Wales, a large temple was built in London at Moorfields, housing an attendance of 3,000, with buildings for a school for boys and a school for girls.<sup>41</sup> Several societies were started throughout the country from this base.<sup>42</sup> The expansion was so great, Dallimore contends that George Whitefield could have been the credited founder of Methodism had he not stepped away from leadership over his regard for Wesley.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Townsend, 269.

<sup>39</sup> Dallimore, 125.

<sup>40</sup> Townsend, 270. Trevecca was known as the divinity school of 'Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.'

<sup>41</sup> Townsend, 270

<sup>42</sup> Dallimore, 125-7.

<sup>43</sup> Townsend, 270. Another chapel was built which remains to this day at Tottenham Court Road. See Dallimore, 155.

### The Revivalists or Free-Gospellers

This nebulous grouping of the subjects of the monarchy seem to have enjoyed Dow's presence in Britain the most, and to have "profited" from his the most as well. Revivalists demanded dynamic preaching and a moving experience during gatherings, and many gathered in weekly studies or societies, but they never organized into a denomination. The nature of their contribution to Methodism in general seems to be their enthusiasm for enthusiasm, which of course did not sit well with the Old Society. The designation "Free Gospellers" refers to the movement among some of the revivalists to eliminate Parliament's efforts to pay for the ecclesiastic edifice of the country through various taxes, tolls, or rents. The gospel is to be dispensed freely and without cost to the sinner. For this reason Free Gospellers are more of a political party than an actual denomination, and several adherents became involved in the early Primitive Methodist Connexion in England until the 1820s when a paid clergy became almost a necessity. As the governments of both England and the new United States wrestled with the concept of a state church and a dissenting church, reforms were introduced to take the pressure off the individual for the support of a church the taxpayer may not even take advantage of, so the Free Gospellers became obsolete. Their adherents joined other revivalistic groups, and propagated their weaknesses in the area of reform and Bible teaching/discipleship. But Lorenzo Dow strongly appealed to these radicals, who appreciated his struggle with the leaders of established Methodism, and they made up a large portion of his audience. Evidence suggests that Free Gospellers supported Revivalists more for economic than spiritual reasons. His activity in Congleton, Burslem, Risley, Macclesfield and other parts

of Cheshire and Staffordshire near the border with Wales was brought together into the Primitive Methodist Connexion.<sup>44</sup>

### **Primitive Methodist Connexion**

A late-comer to the Methodist banquet table in England was the Primitive Methodist Church, which traces its origin to a modified camp meeting in 1807, but was not officially organized until 1811. The two recognized founders, Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, both “came to the Lord” through the Wesleyan Methodists – Bourne in 1799 and Clowes in 1804 or 05. Both experienced the clash of principles between Revivalism and the Establishment, and both loved Lorenzo Dow. While the name is inconvenient today, those who chose “Primitive” as their distinguishing adjective were capitalizing on a trend the church nourished for hundreds of years. It is no secret that reforming movements within the Christian church had been hungering for the simplicity of primitive faith since the days of the early church fathers, and especially during the Nicene years, in the Middle Ages, and among the Reformers of the sixteenth century. During the 1820s and through the 1880s the Primitive Methodist Church thrived in England, becoming dominant in the central districts of the island and even strong in Northern Ireland and parts of Scotland. Most of their early members were Revivalists and Free-Gospellers, which made the paying of clergy in the early days a bone of contention.

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<sup>44</sup> Dow, 288-303. Dow’s last few months in England are spent in the region of Cheshire – a strategic area close to Wales and north of Liverpool, where Revivalists are active and young men are growing dissatisfied with the Old Society Methodism. The Primitive Methodist Church became the haven for many of these Revivalists, Quaker Methodists (Warrington) and Free-Gospellers. The towns Dow mentions as being places of his greatest success are the chief towns where PM Churches are built. Dow apologizes for leaving for America, without mentioning that he is being pursued by the authorities for violating the Sedition Act. See Dow, 301, for Dow’s explanation that he feels drawn to America – his work done here.

When the Methodist bodies of England came together in 1930, the Primitive Methodists brought a huge membership to the negotiation table. The handful of Primitive Methodist churches that refused to go along with the union were Revivalistic in name only, and tended to be tied to a tradition that was dying out.

The founders – Bourne and Clowes – were “discipled” in Methodism, but also received some training from John Crawfoot, an eccentric who lived on the fringe of Delamere Forest.<sup>45</sup> Before Hugh Bourne was designated leader of the Camp Meeting Methodists, and William Clowes started the prayer group that became known as “Clowesites,” Bourne and Clowes met regularly with Crawfoot at his cottage in the woods.<sup>46</sup> Crawfoot’s reputation as a mystic earned the group the designation, “Magic Methodists,” but they were also known as “Forest Methodist.”<sup>47</sup> Crawfoot and Clowes were hired as evangelists, but Crawfoot did not remain faithful to the movement.<sup>48</sup> As converts were added the name “Primitive Methodists” was embraced.

### **Other groups and merger**

In addition to those forms of Methodism mentioned specifically by Dow, other bodies branched off Methodism in England, including the Bible Christian Methodists and the United Methodist Free Churches mentioned above. Some of these groups died out or became independent under a different name, but the majority of Methodist groups that

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<sup>45</sup> This forest is a park today, with hiking trails, etc. It sits in Cheshire, just east of Wales, and southeast of the famous Mow Cop, the bald, rocky mount upon which the first camp meetings were held by the PMC.

<sup>46</sup> John Walford, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the Late Venerable Hugh Bourne, By a Member of the Bourne Family*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32. First Published in 1854. 117. Bourne purchased Dow’s pamphlet “In Defence of Camp Meetings” in 1807.

<sup>47</sup> Townsend, I, 569.

<sup>48</sup> Townsend, I, 573. Crawfoot objected to the “non-mission” policy adopted to “move cautiously; not weaken ourselves by covering too much ground,” and left to start a Connexion named after himself.

survived into the twentieth century in England came together in 1932 to form the United Methodist Church of Great Britain. As happened in the United States in 1939, majorities of bodies merged, but small clusters of radical conservatives were allowed to opt out of the merger. These few churches were allowed to keep their denominational names and remained independent. Such is the case for a few Primitive Methodist churches which opted out of the 1932 merger. Most of these churches have closed, and a few of those have become museums. Those few churches of Methodist heritage that are still operating and did not join in the 1932 merger now belong to the Evangelical Alliance of the UK.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This body of over 79 denominations has a website – eauk.org. The Hull Primitive Methodist Church seems to be still operating and is a member of the Evangelical Alliance. Hull, on the Humber River in the East Midlands of England, was one of the last towns ‘missioned’ by William Clowes, and became a strong, independent Primitive Methodist Church, with a reputation for evangelism and sending out missionaries. This church was also known for defying Conference policy which they considered too worldly.

## CHAPTER 7

### AMERICAN METHODISM

To understand revivalism in the young United States, or even simply the Methodist revivalists, one would need to trace the development of experiential religion as it formed in England and was transplanted to the American colonies and Canada. While beyond the scope of this study, some details may explain Lorenzo Dow's profound influence.

England was undergoing tremendous change in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately no single variety of religious expression remained "on top" as long as a new monarch, or a trend within Parliament could overthrow a "reigning" religious view. When Puritanism achieved something of a political coup by beheading Charles I, and setting up a Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell, the dissenting church thrived until the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in Kidderminster, Richard Baxter made an attempt to establish a model of state church where biblical discipleship overcame the politics of old and new forms of Christianity. Protestant and Catholic power struggles kept in concealment the battle between Monarchial and Evangelical expressions of Protestant faith. John Bunyan joined hundreds of other pastors who spent time in jail until the 1688 Glorious Revolution, which curtailed the power of the throne and invested great political influence in Parliament, leading to the 1689 Toleration Act.<sup>1</sup> While Increase Mather, in 1691, travelled to England to beseech of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume II, Reformation to the Present*, Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1997), 826. Interestingly, both of John Wesley's grandfathers suffered in prison as dissenters. John Westley (Samuel Wesley's father) and John Annesley (Susannah Wesley's father) were educated, but nonconformist pastors. Apparently Samuel Wesley (Samuel, John and Charles Wesley's



king and Parliament the renewal of the Massachusetts Bay Charter, John Leverett and William Brattle, professors at Harvard, along with Thomas Brattle, organized the Brattle Street Church in Boston, in a move away from strict conformity to the local Boston orthodox tradition. They seemed to be taking their doctrinal cues from English Dissenters and Latitudinarians,<sup>2</sup> doing away with the requirement of membership in the church: a personal relation of religious experience as a condition for participation in Holy Communion. Ironically it was felt that the requirement of a “personal testimony” of religious experience was dampening the movement of the Holy Spirit. Increase and Cotton Mather denounced this innovation as contrary to the “special mission” of the church in New England.

The new charter made Massachusetts a Royal Province. New Englanders proclaimed that religious liberty rather than ecclesiastical purity had been the founders’ motive in establishing the “New World.” This revision of history resulted in a new progressive model of religious expression and constituted a significant development in the concept of American Liberty.<sup>3</sup> While colonists debated for many years the fine points of these notions around kitchen tables and after church services, men like Jonathan Edwards in New England, and John Wesley et al. in England considered how the New

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father) rebelled against his father and became a devoted Church of England man, while Susannah remained a dissenter at heart, and refused to say “Amen” to her husband Samuel’s prayer for the Lord’s blessing on the king. Susannah also took responsibility for training the congregation over which her husband was pastor in Biblical Christianity, much to the chagrin of Samuel, who was seen as less than the head of his large family.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Third Edition, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2008), 333. Latitudinarian Anglicans, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, pushed to limit doctrinal influence, in favor of unity among English, and even Scottish worshippers.

<sup>3</sup> Ned C. Landsman. *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture 1680-1760*, (London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1997), 24-29.

Testament doctrine of salvation by faith could become the foundation of the new world church.

The American First Great Awakening in the 1740s was the result of these considerations on the Reformation doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Jonathan Edwards and the Tennants (William & Gilbert) were only the major voices among colonials who considered themselves “New Lights.” David Brainerd was not alone at Yale, but represented a student movement for stronger adherence to biblical experiences. George Whitefield, the travelling evangelical, was able to pull these far-flung New Lights into a mass movement in New England and the rest of the colonies.<sup>4</sup>

The church in America was rebelling against the English long before the Boston Tea Party, Stamp Act, or Lexington and Concord touched off the Revolutionary War. Ironically it was the Methodist Church that sealed the deal for an episcopate separate from the state for Americans.

### **The Christmas Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church**

John Wesley felt a desire to evangelize the Americas – which he did, in 1766, not in 1735.<sup>5</sup> Historians dispute the first Methodist church in the New World, but Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge were the first recognized missionaries in 1766, followed by Robert Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, and then Richard Wright and Francis Asbury,

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<sup>4</sup>Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), 1990, 93.

<sup>5</sup> W. J. Townsend, D.D; H. B. Workman, M.A., D. Lit.; George Eayrs, F.R.Hist.S, *A New History of Methodism*, in Two Volumes, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 55. In other words, Wesley's trip to Georgia in 1735, before he confessed assurance of saving faith, was not the start of Methodism in the New World. The preaching of Methodists in New York and Maryland, and the raising up of societies is the key event in Methodism's start in America.

commissioned by John Wesley himself in 1769 and 1771. Captain Thomas Webb, the so-called “Apostle of American Methodism,” who was wounded during the Seven Years War, and had made his way home to his mother country, was back in America around 1766, and is praised for his “Whitefield-like” preaching, and with starting several Methodist societies on his own, but Embury and Strawbridge are credited with raising up the first churches – Embury in New York, and Strawbridge in Maryland.<sup>6</sup>

In 1769 Wesley sent Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore in response to a request for more able preachers.<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia was “missioned.” John Wesley asked for volunteers to go to America at the 1771 Bristol Conference – two of the five volunteers were chosen: Richard Wright and Francis Asbury.<sup>8</sup> While Asbury is the best-remembered of the early Methodists in America, all the preachers – those sent and those raised up – remarkably spread the principles of English Methodism throughout the colonies from New York to Maryland.

At the first Conference in America, held on July 14, 1773, the ten European, ordained (frocked) Methodists in attendance declared their allegiance to Rev. John Wesley, and their commitment to avoid the administration of the ordinance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper – violations of the authority of the Church of England. Apparently several of the itinerants raised up in the colonies had committed this breach of etiquette by baptizing new society members and/or their children, and had imposed on the societies

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<sup>6</sup> Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists*, (Baltimore, MD: Magil and Clime, 1810). Embury got his society in New York underway in the early months of 1766, thus beating out the Irish Prophet, Robert Strawbridge, by several weeks. See Townsend, Vol. II, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Townsend, II 65.

<sup>8</sup> Townsend, II 69. Richard Wright stayed mostly in Maryland and Delaware (favorable spots for Methodists during the pre-war years), and had a short assignment in New York, but was returned to England in 1774 after Asbury concluded that he had little stomach for spiritual matters. Asbury (1745-1816), on the other hand, was a powerhouse for America’s iteration of Methodism for the 45 remaining years of his life.

the celebration of the Lord's Supper. All Methodist Society members were exhorted to attend the Church (Anglican), especially those in Virginia and Maryland.

By the third Conference, meeting in Philadelphia on May 17, 1775, however, Methodism's tie with England was becoming a liability. This was less than a month after the battles of Lexington and Concord, and all of America was "in a flame."<sup>9</sup> Because of the "Englishness" of so many of the itinerant preachers, and also because of Wesley's insistence that the Methodist Societies were a subset of the greater Church of England, the Methodists in America were seen as Loyalists, and in opposition to the cause of the Patriots in the up-and-coming democracy. Some of the English missionaries returned to England. Asbury took refuge in Delaware, staying with Judge White during the war years.<sup>10</sup> Asbury was recalled to England by John Wesley, but because of his assignment to the Southern colonies, Asbury never received the order. The Conference of 1776 met in Baltimore, and that of 1777 met at the home of John Watters in Deerfield, Maryland. Of this 1777 Conference, Freeborn Garrettson says, "We parted bathed in tears, to meet no more in this world."<sup>11</sup> By the time of the Conference of May 19, 1778, convened at Leesburg, VA, New York and Philadelphia were held by the British, whose royal fleet was threatening Maryland. Several of the preachers had been imprisoned and Asbury was in hiding at Judge White's.<sup>12</sup> Even with the first loss of members, the Conference took on six new circuits in the South, accepted 11 new probationers for the ministry, and actually

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<sup>9</sup> Townsend, II 74. The Second Continental Congress had been in session in Philadelphia since May 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Townsend, II 76. Why was Asbury safer in Delaware than in Philadelphia or New York? Obviously the rhetoric for Patriotism was stronger in the metropolitan areas, but it is also true that Virginia, Maryland and Delaware tended to look favorably upon Anglican worship, which Methodism could provide, even if informally.

<sup>11</sup> Townsend, II 75.

<sup>12</sup> Townsend, II 76.

considered the administration of the sacraments. Asbury's role as General Assistant in America was proposed at a Conference held at Fluvanna, VA in May of 1779. The preachers from the South had returned to their practice of administering the sacraments, as most of the clergymen of the Church of England had fled the country. A committee to ordain ministers was appointed from among the oldest brethren, who first ordained themselves, then "set apart other ministers that they might administer the holy ordinance of the Church of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

Asbury had a heavy heart over this decision and the break this would demand in the unity of Methodism in America. At Conferences in 1780 and '81 a compromise was reached that would make possible the unity of the body, but in 1782 the Conference was again divided on this critical issue. At the eleventh Conference in 1783 the phrase, "United States" was first used in the minutes.<sup>14</sup>

At the twelfth and last Conference of the Methodist Society, held in both Ellis's Chapel and Baltimore (division over the sacraments), the distilling of liquor and the practice of slavery were denounced. Asbury's Superintendence was ratified in a letter from John Wesley in early 1784.<sup>15</sup>

Following the surrender of Cornwallis, peace was declared in 1783. Asbury had been corresponding with Wesley regarding some form of self-governance and episcopacy for the American Methodists. In February of 1784 Wesley called Thomas Coke to a personal meeting to discuss this matter. The independence of the United States, and the need for clergy among the believers of the Methodists societies in America compelled

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<sup>13</sup> Townsend, II 76-7.

<sup>14</sup> Townsend, II 78.

<sup>15</sup> Townsend, II 79.

Wesley to ordain Coke as Superintendent of the churches in the United States. Coke would then travel to the US and ordain Asbury at his earliest convenience, and the two of them would ordain priests to administer the sacraments. On September 18, 1784, Thomas Coke, along with Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey (newly ordained by Wesley) sailed for America. Wesley drew up letters of ordination and a letter explaining his decision to set aside his devotion to the Church of England, at least for the Methodists of the new United States.<sup>16</sup> How could Wesley justify this disregard for the Church of England?

In a series of letters which Wesley included in his published Works,<sup>17</sup> the founder of Methodism laid out several explanations of actions over the years 1781-1784. He asked his preachers to attend the services of the Church of England, even though some of the priests proclaim a message contrary to what an evangelical believer would consider biblical truth. Wesley did not hope any of his society members would leave the Church of England, but also did not feel any of them were “bound in conscience to attend.”<sup>18</sup> He offered an apology for his decision to bequeath the Methodist Connexion to his One Hundred Faithful Preachers,<sup>19</sup> and asked them to exercise sense to quell the fears that a preacher outside the “100” would be asked to step down from his ministry.<sup>20</sup>

Then, in a letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America, Wesley offered an explanation for his decision to allow the American Methodists to establish themselves as a church separate from the Church of England, including his

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<sup>16</sup> Townsend, II 83-5.

<sup>17</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition, Letters*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 244-56.

<sup>18</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 247.

<sup>19</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 248-50.

<sup>20</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 250-1.

decision to ordain an episcopacy.<sup>21</sup> Wesley told of his conviction, arising from a reading of “Lord King’s *Account of the Primitive Church*,” that Bishops and Presbyters were the same order, “and consequently have the same right to ordain.” Now that the believers in America were separated from England, and its Church, and the priest of the Church of England had all left the country, so that “for some hundred miles together, there is not, either to baptize or to administer the Lord’s supper,” he “appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord’s supper.”<sup>22</sup> This letter is dated, Bristol, September 10, 1784.

Coke, Whatcoat and Vasey caught the first ship to America following this appointment, so that by Christmas, 1784, they were able to meet with the American Methodists in Conference in Baltimore. Note that the Americans had come close to dividing over the issue of administration of the sacraments – those in the South wanting to simply provide this service, and those in the northern areas reluctant to go against Wesley’s previously stated will on the matter. Nearly sixty of the eighty preachers were present at 10 a.m. on December 24, 1784, for the Christmas Conference, where the Methodist Episcopal Church was established. Coke informed the attendees of Mr. Wesley’s intentions. Asbury declined to accept Wesley’s appointment as Superintendent, without the vote of those in attendance. He was unanimously chosen, as was Thomas Coke. On the next day, Christmas Day, Asbury was ordained deacon, then on Sunday an

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<sup>21</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 251-2.

<sup>22</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 252.

elder, and finally, on Monday, Asbury was ordained Superintendent, by Coke, Vasey, Whatcoat, and the Rev. Philip Otterbein, a German minister and friend of Asbury.<sup>23</sup>

At this Conference the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church was adopted, based on the Large Minutes, and the Sunday Service of the Methodist in North America, which Wesley had prepared and sent over with Coke, was ordered to be used.<sup>24</sup>

A school (Cokesbury College) was approved, raising the ire of John Wesley, and after ten days the Conference was adjourned and the preachers returned to their labors.<sup>25</sup>

The Methodist Episcopal Church expanded throughout the nation, and eventually Hope Hull came to Coventry, Connecticut, and preached until a small Methodist society was established, resulting in the salvation and early training in righteousness of Lorenzo Dow.

#### African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Zion and African Union Methodist Protestant Church)

The racial segregation of the American church is a sad story, with serious results that are felt into this 21<sup>st</sup> century, that have no immediate solutions. Richard Allen is credited with the founding of the movement. His close associate was Absalom Jones. In 1787 Allen founded the Free African Society in Philadelphia, to assist struggling African

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<sup>23</sup> Latourette II, 1040. Otterbein, along with Martin Boehm, was responsible for the founding of the Church of the United Brethren, which finally merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1939 to form the United Methodist Church. See Townsend II, 91.

<sup>24</sup> Townsend, 91.

<sup>25</sup> Wesley, Works XIII, 74. This is the famed "My Dear Frankie" letter wherein Wesley chides Asbury for high-mindedness in founding a school and accepting the title "Bishop" rather than simply "Superintendent." Of course the school was a necessity, considering the scarcity of educational institutions in the young nation, and Asbury was not responsible for the mass of preachers referring to him as "Bishop Asbury." Tipple suggests that this letter is seen as proof that Wesley never intended to ordain bishops, opting for the less laden term 'Superintendent.' See Ezra Squier Tipple, *Francis Asbury: The Prophet of the Long Road*, New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1923, 252.



Americans. He was a strong Methodist and attended Saint George's Methodist Episcopal Church. When the church, which the African Americans had helped to build, was redesigned in 1792, African Americans attendees were lifted off their knees during prayer and informed that they were to sit in the designated section of the gallery. Of course this was intolerable, and Richard Allen was led to start the Bethel Methodist Church in 1794.<sup>26</sup> Absalom Jones around the same time founded Saint Thomas's African Episcopal Church. Apparently it was Absalom Jones who was the Rosa Parks of the movement. He was asked to leave during prayers at Saint George's Methodist Episcopal Church. When he requested to be allowed to stay until prayers were over, the trustee called for assistance to lift Jones bodily. By that time prayers were over and the African American worshipers left as a body.<sup>27</sup>

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, was officially recognized in 1816 with Allen as its first Bishop. In New York City a similar movement, with the name "Zion" added to distinguish it from the original AME Church was established in 1821.<sup>28</sup> The AME Zion Church did not grow as quickly as the AME Church did, until the Civil War and Reconstruction, and a strong resolution to merge the AME and AME Zion Churches in 1864, but for an unknown reason this was never implemented.<sup>29</sup>

A denomination centered mostly in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware was the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, which grew out of African American

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<sup>26</sup> Townsend II, 173 and 513. The dates for the start of the Bethel Methodist vary – Townsend claims 1786, while Nathan O. Hatch in *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 109-10, notes a step taken by Richard Allen to make his church totally independent in 1794.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, 197-98.

<sup>28</sup> "Zion" was a prominent name for churches around this time, perhaps reflecting the concept of a New Jerusalem. See Latourette, II, 1251.

<sup>29</sup> Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 52. See also, Townsend, II 513.

members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and members who left the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Townsend claims that in 1890 this denomination was home to almost 4,000 members. Members of this denomination in Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan formed The Evangelist Missionary Church in 1886.<sup>30</sup> Other African American denominations were formed, taking some of the sociological pressure off the church racially, but sadly, leaving us with several churches which have evolved over the last 200 years with an undercurrent of racial tension.<sup>31</sup>

#### James O’Kelly, William Hammet, and Nicholas Snethen

Three offshoots of American Methodism will be considered because of their ties to Lorenzo Dow.

James O’Kelly was present (and ordained)<sup>32</sup> at the Christmas Conference in 1784.<sup>33</sup> After the 1784 Conference Bishop Asbury did not convene a meeting of the preachers. In fact he considered such a meeting unnecessary, and after five years without a meeting, he proposed a council made up of his appointments, which would have “almost plenary powers.”<sup>34</sup> James O’Kelly sent letters to Wesley in England informing him of this display of power on Asbury’s part. Wesley sent Thomas Coke back to America to put a speedy end to this notion of Asbury’s council. When Coke and Asbury

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<sup>30</sup> Townsend, II, 514.

<sup>31</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 241. Richard Allen was instrumental in the Anti-Slavery movement and other efforts for racial equality in the 1800s.

<sup>32</sup> Lee, *Short History*. Jesse Lee was high in the Methodist pantheon – a friend of Asbury, Henry Boehm, and Bishop McKendree, to whom he bids a farewell on his deathbed. See also Rev. J.B. Wakeley, D.D., *The Patriarch of One Hundred Years: Being Reminiscences, Historical and Biographical, of Rev. Henry Boehm*, (New York, NY: Nelson & Phillips, 1875), 462. Jesse Lee served as Chaplain in the U.S. Senate for many years, before scraping some skin off his leg, contracting a fever, and dying a few days later, in 1816.

<sup>33</sup> Townsend, II, 90-102. O’Kelly is known here as “a most laborious and popular evangelist.”

<sup>34</sup> Townsend, II, 102.

met, they were not cordial. O’Kelly had written to Asbury suggesting he step down for a year, which Asbury was not willing to do. O’Kelly was concerned about Asbury’s “spurious episcopacy,” and “ecclesiastical monarchy.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1792 O’Kelly withdrew from the General Conference to found his own church, The Republican Methodist Church, with about thirty other preachers.<sup>36</sup> His proposal to the Conference to limit Asbury’s power and increase the influence of the preachers at large was at first supported by such men as Freeborn Garrettson, Richard Ivey, Hope Hull, and even Thomas Ware – all heavy-hitters of early American Methodism. However, O’Kelly’s proposal was defeated, and he left for Virginia to drum up support. His influence eventually waned and eventually died out, as did the Republican Methodist Church.<sup>37</sup> O’Kelly later changed the name of his followers to “The Christian Church,” in an effort toward ‘primitivism,’ but some saw this as an exclusivist move and left the movement. According to Jesse Lee, by 1809 one could not find two together.<sup>38</sup>

At the Conference of 1792 O’Kelly’s argument resulted in a decision to meet in Conference every four years, and to offer membership in the Conference to all travelling preachers who were in full connexion.<sup>39</sup> Hope Hull remained true to Asbury, but was still in support of recognizing the validity of the individual travelling preacher. It is likely his favor of democracy among the preachers that so influenced Dow to participate in Hull’s class, and to seek Hull’s company as he travelled.

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<sup>35</sup> Wigger, 39.

<sup>36</sup> John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 39.

<sup>37</sup> Townsend II, 102-04.

<sup>38</sup> Lee, 179, 192-4.

<sup>39</sup> Wigger, 39. O’Kelly’s concern was legitimate for America: the concentration of power in one man, Asbury.

Perhaps less significant for the MEC, but more so for Dow, was the William Hammet controversy.<sup>40</sup> William Hammett had “kissed the Blarney Stone,” and was also present at the Christmas Conference when the MEC was founded.<sup>41</sup> He had been ordained by Wesley himself for service in Newfoundland, but he located farther South.<sup>42</sup> By 1791 William Hammet moved to Charleston, South Carolina from Jamaica. Even before the 1792 Conference Hammet was concerned with Asbury’s power to place him. Hammet had a reputation for moving about, but not necessarily where Asbury wanted him. Hammet started a church in Charleston in 1791, which he styled the Primitive Methodist Church. His group was associated with churches in Georgetown and Savannah. After his death the movement fizzled out, and one of the churches in Wilmington, North Carolina experienced a racial split – the African American congregation going on to merge with stronger churches, and the remaining white congregation dying off. Hammet’s church in Charleston eventually merged with the Methodist Episcopal Conference of South Carolina under the name “Trinity Church,” and then was joined to the historic Cumberland MEC of Charleston. Hammet’s movement, Primitive Methodists, was not associated with the Primitive Methodist Connexion referenced elsewhere in this paper.

What is significant for the study of Lorenzo Dow is the libel lawsuit Dow faced several years after the death of William Hammet. In his Journal, under the date Monday, January 9, 1804, Dow notes his arrival at Charleston, where he discovers that Hamet (sic) had passed away recently. Dow comments that the division William Hammet caused was

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<sup>40</sup> Hammet’s last name is variously spelled Hamet, Hammit and Hammett, depending on the source.

<sup>41</sup> Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 133.

<sup>42</sup> Townsend I, 372.

due to the impure motive of desire for popularity, and worst of all, Dow accuses Hammet of having died drunk.<sup>43</sup> Hammet's name is not mentioned again in the printed *Journal*, which Dow ends in 1816.

Several years later, in January of 1820, Dow and his second wife Lucy are again in Charleston, where, at Duke Goodman's Shop, he is confronted by Captain James C. Martindale and Mr. Benjamin Hammet, the son of the famed Methodist dissenter, William Hammet.<sup>44</sup> Dow is charged with libel and ordered to sign a retraction, and to recall all copies of the *Journal*, which, Dow claimed, had already gone to the "four corners of the globe."<sup>45</sup> The case went to trial, and Dow lost. He is fined one dollar and ordered to pay all costs, which all parties involved relinquished in his behalf, and he was sentenced to spend a day in jail – the governor's pardon saved him from this indignity. Dow was now a convicted criminal, though, and his rage knew no bounds. With quivering lip he berated the sin of wealth, and the underhandedness of British Common Law. He cried out for justice from the Great Jehovah, and prayed for the day when the hidden secrets of men would be revealed.<sup>46</sup>

Lucy had left for home at the beginning of the trial. Lorenzo returned to her for an unhappy winter in Montville. He was 42 years old, and for the first time in years missed his travels down South in the cold months. His travelling seems to have diminished around this time.

Nicholas Snethen's departure from the MEC is also related to our study of Dow. In 1806, while preparing for his second trip overseas, in addition to a signed affidavit

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<sup>43</sup> Dow, 178-9.

<sup>44</sup> Sellers, 204-09.

<sup>45</sup> Sellers, 206.

<sup>46</sup> Sellers, 209.

from then-Secretary of State James Madison, Dow obtained two signed character references, from Nicholas Snethen and James Quackenbush. These men appeared before a notary and swore that Lorenzo Dow was a man of outstanding character.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, just after Dow embarked for England, Nicholas Snethen, on November 16, 1805, from New York, sent a letter to the Methodists in Ireland and England, warning,

Mr. Lorenzo Dow, has embarked again for Europe, better furnished perhaps for success than when he was with you last. – His confidence of success must at least be very considerably increased having succeeded so well in deceiving or duping so many of the preachers in the American connexion. I hope that our brethren in Europe will resolve to have nothing to do with him.<sup>48</sup>

This “take back” of Snethen’s endorsement caused Dow no end of trouble in England. Methodists pursued him, and even turned the constables on him. He was forced to leave the country for America in April of 1807, getting away by the skin of his teeth as his pursuers watched the ship pull out from the dock. Dow had hoped to take with him a group of poor Methodists to the land of opportunity, and had chartered the swift American packet *Averick* for that purpose, but the haste of his departure made his plan unfeasible.<sup>49</sup>

His relationship with James Quackenbush was not much more congenial. Dow collected subscription money from individuals interested in purchasing copies of Dow’s Writings. Dow sent the money to Quackenbush, who was to give it to Mr. W. the printer. Quackenbush took the note, and gave Mr. W. a portion for the printing. Of course the

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<sup>47</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *The Life, Travels, Labors, and Writings of Lorenzo Dow; including his Singular and Erratic Wanderings in Europe and America*, (New York, NY: United States Book Co., no date), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Dow, 719.

<sup>49</sup> Sellers, 121.

printer was in business to make money, so he did not print any of Dow's Writings. Dow was unaware of Quackenbush's deceit. When it was time to deliver books to the subscribers, none were printed. Now Dow was forced to "pay twice" for the printing of the books, which was delayed. Obviously the subscribers were dissatisfied as well.<sup>50</sup>

In any event, Snethen's Methodist Protestant Church was the strongest rival of all offshoots of Methodism in America. Snethen was an influential advocate for lay rights. He was a fiery preacher, and had served in several of the larger circuits of the MEC before purchasing a farm in Frederick County, Maryland, not far from Washington D.C. in 1806. Contrary to Asbury's policy of moving his preachers about annually, Snethen served for several years in the circuit surrounding his farm, and, because of his reputation as a rousing preacher, he served as Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives for a few years.<sup>51</sup> Snethen had concerns about Asbury's monarchical grip on the MEC from the beginning, and had complained about this when others, such as O'Kelly and Freeborn Garrettson were battling for more lay representation.<sup>52</sup> Snethen knew Asbury well, and had his ear while he toured with Asbury during the Bishop's prime years.<sup>53</sup> Snethen wrote on the subject,<sup>54</sup> and after the death of Francis Asbury, was instrumental in lobbying for a relaxation on the restrictions to lay participation in the Conference. A

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<sup>50</sup> Dow, 310-12.

<sup>51</sup> George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, *The American Cyclopaedia*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873, Volume 9). While Snethen writes on lay representation, one wonders if his interest is more personal, now that he has settled down and desires to be released from the Itinerant System and the mandatory relocation that involved. Asbury's ire was no doubt raised by this act of independence on Snethen's part – Asbury's perception of commitment as a preacher was a willingness to travel and relocate at the Bishop's will.

<sup>52</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 82.

<sup>53</sup> Tipple, 324.

<sup>54</sup> Ripley. Nicholas Snethen wrote *Lectures on Preaching* in 1822, *Essays on Lay Representation* in 1835, and *Lectures on Biblical Subjects* in 1836.

society was formed – *The Wesleyan Repository* – in Philadelphia in 1822, to agitate the question for lay rights, and a newspaper was circulated – *Mutual Rights of the Ministers and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church*. In 1826 a petition was sent to the 1828 General Conference, which was defeated, and several agitators were expelled, which started a mass exodus from the MEC.<sup>55</sup>

Among those leaving was Nicholas Snethen. He and several other influential preachers formed the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830.<sup>56</sup> This denomination thrived in the new democracy,<sup>57</sup> especially through the Civil War years. In the early 1900s the smaller Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America entertained notions of merging with the Methodist Protestant Church, but neither group voted positively to follow through on the lengthy negotiations that were held. In 1939 when several other Methodist bodies were merged into the United Methodist Church, the Methodist Protestants formed a smaller partner to the large United Brethren Church and the even larger MEC.

### **Regular Renewal and Revival**

We have mentioned several churches that split off from the MEC, and have noted that there were denominations that were fraternal with Asbury's MEC, such as Philip Otterbein and Martin Boehm's<sup>58</sup> *United Brethren*, and Jacob Albright's *Evangelical*

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<sup>55</sup> Townsend, II, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Townsend, II, 126.

<sup>57</sup> Hatch, 205-6.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Boehm's son Henry traveled with Francis Asbury in the Bishop's later years, and has written a book of Reminiscences which is available for purchase, along with an index, at the Boehm Chapel in Willow Street, PA, just south of Lancaster. Henry Boehm preferred travelling to settling in his father's Methodist Episcopal chapel, and lived for a remarkable 100 years. See Henry Boehm, *Reminiscences*.



*Association* of 1816. Before the great merger of Methodist bodies in 1939, these churches all struggled to maintain the practice of evangelism through Itinerancy. This meant that preachers were considered missionaries until they would marry or for other reasons “locate” in a parish ministry, to begin the “cure of souls.” The itinerant was responsible not only for acting as the most talented preacher in several churches on a circuit, but moving into the surrounding towns to “mission” the people there until a society was raised up and eventually a Local Preacher would be appointed to serve the town’s church. This method of missioning towns was effective for the various Methodist bodies until formalism moved the preachers away from this practice.

Other methods were added to the Itinerant System, including the use of Camp Meetings and then Revival Services. There were preachers who did Camp Meeting and Revival circuits – similar to the old Itinerant System, except the people of a town would invite the preacher to revive religion in the area, rather than the preacher coming to the area on his own to raise up a body of believers.

It was learned that a church could not remain healthy without some stirring, out-of-the-ordinary meetings occasionally, or even annually or semi-annually. At these meetings many stalwart church members would be renewed in their walk with the Lord, and many who were left outside the church fellowship would come to repentance and join the church.

Regular renewal and revival counteracted the inevitable hardness of heart that would develop in the church and among the members. A new convert or two, or a renewed vitality among older converts was just the shot in the arm that churches needed to maintain devoted service to the Lord. Over time, however, the revival services became

themselves ineffective and predictable. Churches began to neglect the regular renewal of Revival Services and Camp Meetings, and soon there were few sources of inspiring faith among the bodies of Methodism. The Baptists and Presbyterians suffered this same sad development of “schlero-cardia” or hardness of heart that the apostle Paul warns against.<sup>59</sup>

When a church ceases to provide for its own regular renewal and revival, the Lord raises up an evangelist like Wesley, Whitefield, Dow or Billy Graham to start a passionate movement back to lively faith among the believers.

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<sup>59</sup> The Bible, Hebrews 3:8

## CHAPTER 8

### CROSS-POLLINATION BETWEEN CONTINENTS

The quintessential “missionary” to America has to be George Whitefield, who crossed the Atlantic 13 times – seven full visits to the continent. The Englishman died in the new world, 30 September, 1770, at Newburyport, MA.<sup>1</sup> John Wesley came as a missionary to America before Whitefield did, but his mission was not at all effective. Even he admits that he came to America to convert “Indians,” but wondered who would convert him.<sup>2</sup> But even if we count Wesley as “missioning” America before Whitefield, he certainly was not the first. Just as Christopher Columbus brought 12 Roman Catholic priests with him on his second voyage to the West, the Pilgrims and Puritans were famous for attempting to populate the new colonies with pastoral appointments from England, and to train those born on the American side of the Atlantic at places like Harvard, then Yale and even later Princeton. The gold medal still must go to George Whitefield for having the most effective ministry on both sides of the Atlantic, and it was Whitefield that Lorenzo Dow was imitating – whether he knew it or not – and not his hero, John Wesley.

For that matter, Francis Asbury crossed the Atlantic to “mission” the continent before Lorenzo Dow was even born in 1777. George Whitefield was more effective than Wesley or Francis Asbury in making the oceanic crossing. Here is the reason: Whitefield

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 195.

<sup>2</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition*, Volume I, Journals from October 14, 1735 to November 29, 1745, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 74-77. For an analysis of this portion of Wesley's journal and his conversion account see Albert Outler, *John Wesley*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 44-50.

came to the new world without an imposed agenda. Wesley had the charge of acting as the priest for the English passengers on Oglethorpe's ship. He may have thought he was coming to pastor the Native American residents of Georgia, but one reason his mission failed was that his boss insisted that Wesley stay in the safety of the English settlement, and not venture into Native American territory on the mainland of Georgia, or even on Saint Simon's Island. Francis Asbury had the charge of Superintending the Methodists.

George Whitefield, on the other hand, had no such confinement. Whitefield had the entire settled continent on which to roam at will. Lorenzo Dow had no attachments such as circuit assignments or the need for the approval of a Quarterly meeting; Dow could travel at will.

This chapter deals with the fascinating interplay between the English-speaking new world and the mother country. This particular study will be based on an assumption: the entrepreneurial dimension that makes up what this paper contends is the Dow Factor demands a self-directed mission. John Wesley in England, and Francis Asbury in America, were uncontested Methodists, but carried the burden of the churches of their particular world, old or new. George Whitefield and Lorenzo Dow are known as Methodists, but operated and travelled without the sanction of any particular church or society. Wesley and Asbury are known as the builders of Methodism in their homeland,<sup>3</sup> but travelled, not at will, but as needed by the society/church over which they held superintendence. The office of Leader of Methodism in England or America became the yoke that dictated the extent of their contribution to the church.

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<sup>3</sup> Asbury adopted America as his homeland, and even took the side of America during the Revolution, while being accused of loyalty to the crown. After the Revolution his patriotism was never questioned.

Whitefield – and Lorenzo Dow – on the other hand, held no office. Their names never appeared on a circuit assignment.<sup>4</sup> They never took a charge. Both participated in the cross-pollination between the two continents that made the growth of Methodism on two continents possible.<sup>5</sup> Wesley and Asbury were Superintendents, while Whitefield and Dow were travelling preachers. The Superintendents were bound to oversee, while the travelers were free to move about where the entrepreneurial spirit led them. The Overseers were committed to the stability of the organization, while the entrepreneurs were free to bring in new growth, then move on. Wesley and Asbury were concerned with assignments, while Whitefield and Dow enjoyed appointments. And those appointments were anticipated in advance by the people of towns who could hardly wait for the arrival of the travelling preacher who chose to bless them with his presence.

This is a critical distinction. The entrepreneurial spirit cannot be bound by the burden of oversight, stability or assignment. That role is to be filled by the necessary Superintendent. The missionary must be free to move about for the purpose of growth, not stability – he makes appointments; he is not assigned.

It is the contention of this paper that the need for necessary stability among converts has supplanted the entrepreneurial ingathering of new converts. Both Dow and Whitefield are accused of doing a poor job of raising up followers. Wesley and Asbury were experts at gathering followers into small groups and larger churches. Dow's converts joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, or the English equivalent, and

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<sup>4</sup> It is true that Dow was assigned to a circuit on two occasions – the Tolland County Circuit, which included his hometown of Coventry, at the beginning of his career, and the Dutchess & Columbia County Circuit in New York after his first trip to Ireland. But on both occasions he ignored his appointment after less than one full circuit. He was 'free lance' after that.

<sup>5</sup> A similar case can be made for the other lands missioned by Methodism.

Whitefield's converts joined the local church in the English and American towns he visited – someone else trained the converts in righteousness. But who is taking care of this for the church today. Billy Graham is no longer able to supply this need in the church today. As the Revival Circuit has grown out of favor among churches in the Revival tradition, stability has resulted in stagnation. Clusters of small churches no longer have entrepreneurs to come in from the outside and challenge the practices of the organization.

This chapter deals with the cross-pollination that has been taking place for over 300 years between England and America.<sup>6</sup> This sharing of DNA across the ocean is best carried out by those who practice this among small towns and churches. This cross-pollination is simply a travelling itinerant ministry on a continental basis. George Whitefield is the proto-type and Lorenzo Dow is the second generation evangelist version 2.0. Whether these itinerants travelled from town to town or continent to continent, their purpose was the same: to meet basic human needs, not become experts on the minutiae of regional needs.

It is common practice to employ pastors regionally, or to give lessons to pastors on ministering to a region in which they are not “natives.” For example New England, and the American South in the United States have distinctive “cultures.” Anyone sent from outside the region to minister is sternly warned not to make major changes in a church until the region is understood. This is probably good advice for people planted in one place for several years. But an entrepreneur has no such limitation. In fact, an

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<sup>6</sup> It must be said again, that there is more to Church History than what took place in North America and England. The reason most Church Histories neglect the rest of the world is because of the suddenness and predictability of the developments of the church in these places. Here there was no underground, and the history of the church was proclaimed in newspapers, books and journals – in the light of day. Elsewhere in the world there was church history, but buried more deeply in the culture than in North America, where religious accounts – accurate or not – are worn on the sleeve.

outsider is most effective coming into a region for a short time to shake things up, then leave. Viva la difference! The sameness is snapped out of stagnation and new life is nurtured. Revival and Reformation are made possible by the outgoing and “can do” attitude of the traveler who moves on before people have a chance to get used to the evangelist’s pattern. The itinerant can bring the same set of sermons to many different towns, or even continents, and there is an effective response.

Can the church encourage the Dow Factor – an entrepreneurial spirit; defiance of the status quo and refusal to comply with the rules of leadership; the ability to relate quickly with the common man; less need to settle down matrimonially – and snap the traditional church into concern for the lost? Is this a personality issue that we have to pray that the Lord raises up among us, or can people already in our churches be trained to act like entrepreneurs? If we do not have many entrepreneurs in the church, is it because God is not raising them up, or is it because we are channeling these people into stability roles rather than harvesting roles?

This chapter examines the cross-pollination between two continents (at least the Anglophones on two continents) as a model of entrepreneurial policy that can be used between regions, towns and individual churches to bring mutual reformation and revival in both entities. Lorenzo Dow’s travels on both sides of the Atlantic will be the model for modern renewal of the church.

## The Tradition of Crossing the Atlantic

Lorenzo Dow was not the first to expand his territory with a long voyage. Thomas Paine,<sup>7</sup> Joseph Pilmore,<sup>8</sup> and Benjamin Franklin<sup>9</sup> multiplied their influence exponentially by travel across the ocean separating parts of the English-speaking world. Showing up unannounced with a distinctly old-world, or new-world accent has a long history of magnifying one's influence. Of course bouncing between continents could have a reverse-effect, as in the case of Increase Mather – a heavy-hitter in Boston – who travelled to England to negotiate a continuation of the Massachusetts Bay Charter with the King, and was forced to return home with a modified charter that had the King appointing governors, rather than their being elected by the citizens of the colony.<sup>10</sup> Of course an argument can be made from the negative effects of this set-back further stimulating the residents of New England to press for democracy.

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<sup>7</sup> Paine was not a best-selling author when he came to America from Britain in 1774, but his *Common Sense* became a best-seller in 1776. The popularity he gained in the promotion of the Revolution placed him on an international pedestal, so that he could write *The Rights of Man* from France in 1791, and his deistical *The Age of Reason* in 1793-94. By moving to the front line (America in 1774; France in 1791) he was able to capture the world stage. He is a cross-pollinator on a continental basis. Not bad for a corset-maker. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume II: Reformation to the Present*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), pages 1007, 1078 & 1230. Also, Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture 1680-1760*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Pilmore (Pilmoor) was chosen as a representative of continental cross-pollination mostly because he represents Wesley's effort to relate to the Americans without actually sailing to the new world himself. Pilmore's influence may have been just as great had he stayed in England like he seems to have wanted (he returns as soon as his loyalty to the crown made life difficult in America during a revolt against the mother country in the 1770s), but it is just as likely that we would have never heard of him had Wesley not chosen him to be an early missionary of Methodism in the colonies of America. See Joseph Pilmore, *The Journal of Joseph Pilmore*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Historical Society of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 254. While a case can be made that Franklin's most influential work in Europe took place in the court of French government, he did make his way to England and assisted in the negotiations that brought the new United States toward recognition by the mother country as a viable nation. As an agent of Pennsylvania's Assembly in 1766 he helped bring about a repeal of the Stamp Act, Morgan, 148. And after the war, while in England, Franklin helped negotiate the peace with England in 1782, from France, Morgan, 316.

<sup>10</sup> Landsman, 18, 167.



The point is that the church profits overall when individuals with a venturesome spirit are willing to move out of the familiarity of their comfort zones and address staid, secure people with a message demanding change.

### **Crossing Back – Lorenzo Dow: itinerancy on a continental basis**

This paper contends that a return to an Itinerant System similar to that developed by John Wesley could be beneficial to the small, under-resourced church or church outpost. An Itinerant System would consist of men and women who are not necessarily ordained to ministry, but have a simple, timely message to deliver once to a series of churches. Their oddness or ethno-cultural incompatibility may prove to be a blessing in stirring up devotion among the people of God, or even stimulating faith in unbelievers. While not a universal solution to the declining church today, this pattern has been effective among neighborhoods comprised of lower working class individuals who are driven passionately to the Lord from a life of obvious sin.<sup>11</sup>

Such is the case with Lorenzo Dow's self-directed itinerancy from America to England. While he brags that his efforts were directed toward inspiring Methodists to more godly living and that he channeled his converts into established Methodist societies, and that he never raised up any "Dowites,"<sup>12</sup> there is a group of believers who claim Dow as their inspiration and credit him for their ministry apart from the Wesleyan Methodists of England.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul encourages a multiplicity of talents approach in Ephesians 4:11-13, in the Bible.

<sup>12</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite, or, the Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: Containing His Experience and Travels in Europe and America, up to Near His Fiftieth Year; Also His Polemic Writings, to which is added the Journal of Life*, (Cincinnati, OH: Joshua Martin & Alex. S. Robertson), 1849, 333.

<sup>13</sup> As introduced in chapter six of this work. See below – the small congregation at Risley.

The English Midlands start in the northeast corner of Wales in Cheshire County and proceed across the Island between the Trent and Humber Rivers. Where the Trent enters the Humber, heading east, the Midlands are found on both north and south banks of the Humber River – the southern edge of Northumberland. This is the region of the Industrial Revolution off the 1800s, and already by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century light industry is prominent here – coal mining, porcelain, and textile production. This area is more centered on Liverpool than London. The feud between the houses of York and Lancaster has its history in this region. While Methodism has made inroads into this critical region, this paper has already mentioned a schismatic bias among these people. For example, while this area is home to the Northwich Circuit, the Methodist Society at Warrington, thirty miles from Norwich, was not strictly regulated by the Methodist Elder, and the Warrington Society was able to develop into an Independent or Quaker Methodist society.

When Lorenzo Dow made his first voyage to Ireland in 1799 through 1801 he attempted twice to get onto the main English island from Northern Ireland. The first attempt was aborted by ill winds, but the second try got him into this Midland region, where he worked with several Methodist Societies that were not completely loyal to the Wesleyan Methodists. He encouraged a young man at Congleton, and spoke to believers in Burslem and Macclesfield, and even raised up a group of believers in Risley who would go on to call themselves “Dowites.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Dow, 262. Dow did not request that they name themselves after him. His campaign in that part of the country was very successful during his first tour of Ireland and England. He visited this region at least three times during his second trip to Europe in 1805-1807 – and each time devoted a great deal of his time to sympathetic listeners among the New Connexion (Kilhamites) and what Dow refers to as the third division of Methodism – Wesleyan and Kilhamites being the first two). Dow claims they are made up of Quaker Methodists and Free-Gospellers. The Midlands had been missioned by the Wesleyans, but the

During his second tour of England and Ireland in 1805-1807, Dow made at least three trips into this Midland region of England, where he had received so much support during his first visit in 1800. At this time Dow was moving about to stay a step ahead of the authorities who were charged with arresting him for violating the Sedition Act – as an American he was unable to swear to an oath of allegiance to the Crown, and his preaching to large groups only exacerbated the charge. So Dow was never in one town two days in a row. He covered many of the key towns on the Methodist's Northwich Circuit which was already suffering from the independence of the Warrington society (Quaker Methodists). Several societies in the Midlands region had been contending with Kilhamites and Independent Methodists. Kilhamites, or New Connexion Methodists, were concerned with the power of the superintendent in contriving the annual preaching plan. Quaker, or Independent Methodists were chafing under the Methodist yoke of anti-enthusiasm – the Warrington Society wanted a more passionate worship experience.

In addition to the dissatisfaction of many Methodists in the Midlands, Hugh Bourne and William Clowes were experiencing their own difficulties with the Methodist society. Bourne was brought to Christ in 1799,<sup>15</sup> and joined a Methodist society. In the Methodist Magazine he read accounts of Camp Meetings in America, and began to dream of a full day of prayer on a local landmark known as Mow Cop – a rocky mountain on the Staffordshire/Cheshire border. Besides its prominence, this site was famous for having had a castle ruin constructed at its summit by a wealthy eccentric who just felt the

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democratic leanings of the residents made this a hot-bed for rebellion against the stiffening Wesleyan Methodists.

<sup>15</sup> He does not credit the Methodists, but while working on the construction of a saw mill in Warrington, a Quaker from the area lent him several books, such as the *Life of Wesley* by Coke and Moore, and John Fletcher's *Letters*. See John Walford, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the Late Venerable Hugh Bourne, by a Member of the Bourne Family*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1854), 33-36.

mountain deserved a ruin in the appearance of an old castle on top of it. As early as 1801 Hugh Bourne had attempted a Camp Meeting, English-style at Mow Cop.<sup>16</sup> The effort was only moderately successful, though, and the authorities were not happy with Bourne's constant insistence on attempting a modified American camp-meeting/full day of prayer in the English Midlands. When what became known as the first English camp meeting was held on Mow Cop on May 31, 1807, the Methodist Conference responded with this minute: "It is our judgment, that even supposing such meetings to be allowed in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief; and we disclaim all connection with them."<sup>17</sup>

Bourne was taken off the plan of preachers, and without notice his name was removed from society membership.<sup>18</sup> He continued to promote camp meetings, and the society that raised up under his leadership became known as the Camp Meeting Methodists. He was an introvert, and known for preaching with his hand over his mouth, but he was a good organizer. He was the John Wesley of Primitive Methodism.

The George Whitefield of the PMC, though, was William Clowes. Clowes worked at the Wedgewood Porcelain factory, and as a relative of the Wedgewood family was apprenticed to learn the trade of producing the china plates and table furnishings for

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<sup>16</sup> There is no evidence that Lorenzo Dow had inspired this attempt, even though he had toured the area in 1800/01. Dow was not present at the Cane Ridge Camp Meeting in Kentucky in 1801, and he does not mention promoting camp meetings until after he first attends one in 1802. Hugh Bourne is solely influenced by the accounts in the Methodist Magazine. Dow is credited, though, with inspiring the second camp-meeting in 1807, during his second trip to England. An account of this attempt to hold a camp meeting may be found in Walford, 76.

<sup>17</sup> John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion: from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, (London, UK: R. Davies, Conference Offices, 1864), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Petty, 33. Also see Walford, 155-6 for Bourne's account of his dismissal from the Methodist Society, as well as his interactions with Quaker, or Independent Methodists at Warrington, and his relationship with the society at Risley (Risley) that Lorenzo Dow is credited with raising up.

the wealthy families of England.<sup>19</sup> He learned to make his day's quota of porcelain in the first few hours of the day, so he had plenty of free time. He was a professional dancer as well as a pugilist.<sup>20</sup>

Clowes was brought to the Lord through the Methodist Society at Harriseahead, which held a Love Feast on January 27, 1805. Clowes was not invited, but stole a ticket, and while in attendance heard the gospel and was born again.<sup>21</sup> He became acquainted with Daniel Shubotham, who knew Hugh Bourne and his brother James. Soon Clowes and Bourne were good friends, and participated in the instructional meetings held by James Crawfoot, the Magic Methodist, who lived on the edge of the mysterious Delamere Forest. Clowes had been an attender of William Smith's prayer group until it was closed by the Methodist Society apparently because Clowes often repeated, "Send Fire," during his prayer.<sup>22</sup> Other complaints against Clowes: he said, "My God," rather than, "Our God;" he prayed for the same thing more than the recommended three times; and he lifted up his voice more than was necessary. Like Bourne, when Clowes was asked to leave the society he simply took up the leadership of a group of his own followers – the Clowesites.<sup>23</sup> Clowes went to hear Dow, and participated in the first camp meeting on Mow Cop, May 31, 1807, but became disinterested in them for 15 months.

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<sup>19</sup> John Wedgewood was one of the early PMC preachers. His grandniece, the pious Emma Wedgewood married the famous Charles Darwin. See *Christian History*, Issue 107, Debating Darwin: How the Church Responded to the Evolution Bombshell, 7. See also H.B.Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church, Volume I*, (London, UK: Edwin Dalton, 1889), 251-4.

<sup>20</sup> A pugilist is a prize fighter. In his day two men would be locked in a ring to fight to the finish. The winner received a cut of the gambling money. See William Clowes, *The Journals of William Clowes: A Primitive Methodist Preacher, Containing Chronicles of Events, etc.* (London, UK: Hallam and Holliday, Conference Offices, 1844), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Clowes, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Clowes, 53.

<sup>23</sup> Kendall, 102-6.

Bourne, his brother John, and a cousin, Daniel Shubotham, along with Clowes testify to having gone to hear Lorenzo Dow when he toured the area in April of 1807.<sup>24</sup> Bourne bought Dow's pamphlet "In Defence of Camp Meetings"<sup>25</sup> and sacrificed to walk quite far to hear Dow again in another town. Dow's influence brought them courage to continue even when censured by the Methodist societies of which they were members. A society known as the Primitive Methodist Connexion was started in 1811, and towns along the Trent and Humber Rivers were missioned, societies established and chapels built. By 1820 the connexion was beginning to thrive and the societies grew due to the enthusiasm of the leaders.<sup>26</sup> By the centennial year 1910 the movement had grown to 210,000 members, short of the 250,000 prayed for in the years leading up to the centennial.<sup>27</sup> Their growth was brought about mostly by outdoor preaching in the early years, creating excitement that continued as the gospel was proclaimed to new listeners throughout the 1800s. As can be predicted the preachers became pastors, settled into parish ministry, and missioning ceased. The definition of "Itinerant System" took on new meaning, and care of the members' souls became a priority over the proclamation of the gospel in towns without a representative chapel. When stability took over among the preachers the growth rate flattened. Missionary activity maintained enthusiasm among the members into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1932 most of the PMC merged with other Methodist bodies in England.

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<sup>24</sup> Bourne, 117. Bourne testifies that his friend and cousin, Daniel Shubotham, had become "unprimitive" – meaning less interested in the passionate expressions of faith, but when Daniel heard Dow in Macclesfield he was turned around. Also see Clowes, 66-7.

<sup>25</sup> Dow explains the American Camp Meeting experience as taking place over several days, similarly to the Scottish Holy Fairs, but Bourne never suggests the need for tents to sleep in at his camp meetings, which are single days of prayer interspersed with preaching.

<sup>26</sup> The early PMs were known as "Ranters" due to the loudness and garishness of their singing.

<sup>27</sup> Dave Price, *Turning the World Upside down: Learning from the Primitive Methodist Movement*, (Melbourne, Aus: Self-published, 2012), 128.

## **Growth through Immigration**

In 1829 the English Primitive Methodists sent four missionaries to Brooklyn, New York. Their mission was to establish the PMC on the American continent. A cross-pollination should have taken place, but imitation without power is very disappointing. The four missionaries – three men and one woman, plus the wife of one male missionary – found life in Brooklyn trying. They were underfunded, and requests to the mother country did not produce much support. The message of the PMC was not new to the United States – Lorenzo Dow and other evangelists of the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Independent churches had already picked the low-hanging fruit, and the growing city of Brooklyn turned out to be less promising than they had imagined. Two of the missionaries moved to Philadelphia, with similar lack-luster success. These missionaries and their churches struggled in the cities, but found success in the coal-mining towns north of Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River. Churches were established in Tamaqua and Saint Clair, Pennsylvania, then other small mining settlements which grew into towns, such as Mount Carmel and Shamokin.<sup>28</sup> In fact, Hugh Bourne visited the PMC in the USA in the 1850s, and preached at the Brooklyn churches as well as other PM Churches. Only the Tamaqua church is still active, and the settee upon which Hugh Bourne rested prior to preaching is held in honor at this church.

In the 1840s several Primitive Methodists from England migrated to the new state of Illinois. They began outreach among the lead miners and farmers of the State of Illinois and Wisconsin Territory. At one time there were 90 churches in Wisconsin.

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<sup>28</sup> This town along the Schuylkill River is not the Shamokin David Brainerd refers to in his Journal. He established a mission to Native Americans in Shamokin closer to the Delaware River, east of today's city of Shamokin, where there is still a PMC.

Unfortunately the lead mines closed when the lead ran out, and in 1849 thousands of miners left their tent churches for California and gold.<sup>29</sup> The PMC grew slowly as English Primitive Methodists moved to the new world and started small PM Churches with fellow immigrants. The church grew by immigration, not by spreading the gospel. English-speakers settled together in ghettos of commonness, cut off from other ghettos of immigrants from other countries in the new world, and separated from English-speaking Americans. Outreach ceased, and American Primitive Methodists strove to appear as normal as possible in the sea of overwhelming diversity. There was almost no intermingling among other ethnic groups, and the lower working class immigrants found the support of a church, much less a mission-minded church, difficult. Organization developed in accordance with the strength of the churches. Primitive Methodists saw growth among the steel towns of Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio, and the fishing and textile towns of New England. As Wilkes-Barre and Scranton evolved into economic powers in Northeastern PA, the Primitive Methodist Conference grew in numbers.

At first the churches in the East requested to be identified with the incorporated “Primitive Methodist Church of the State of Illinois and Wisconsin Territory.” The churches of the eastern states became known as the “Atlantic District.” Then as the churches in the Midwest shrunk or closed, in 1872 the Eastern Conference was established for all churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and New England. The Eastern Conference was further divided in 1893 when the Pennsylvania Conference became its own conference. In 1929 the Western Conference – Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana – merged with the Pennsylvania Conference, then the Eastern

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<sup>29</sup> Colorado, Nevada and other places with metal mines were also common destinations. For a short time there was a PM Church in Colorado, but that too closed when the miners moved on.



Conference merged into the Pennsylvania Conference in 1948. The “Pennsylvania” was dropped officially in the 1960s, and all areas became districts of the Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America.

Several Hispanic churches were opened, but once again, not because of outreach growth, but because individuals from one country immigrated to the USA and looked for a denomination with which to associate. The practice of ingrowth continued. The PMC USA maintained its enclave mentality and lost touch with outreach, or the eccentricity that many hurting people found appealing.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Weakness of Stability**

Undeclared in the histories of the PMC in England and America is the simultaneous cessation of growth and increase in organization. In these days of the church growth movement and the emerging church, we can easily accuse the traditional church of causing its own demise simply by imposing upon itself an obsession with practices from the past or organizational methods that are outdated. But we blame our decline on another trend not related to worship style or church polity – the end of cross-pollination that promotes growth through a clergy that is unsettled.

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<sup>30</sup> Two sources exist for a study of the Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America. The first is John Holmes Acornley's *A History of the Primitive Methodist Church in the United State of America from its Origin and the Landing of the First Missionaries in 1829 to the Present Time*, (Fall River, MA: B.R. Acornley & Co., Printers, 1909). This has been scanned using Optical Character Recognition by General Books LLC, Memphis, TN in 2012 – but the digital copy contains no pictures. Acornley's book originally contained a photograph of each church building described, and many of the pastors alive when Acornley printed the book. The second is by Rev. William H. Fudge, *Primitive Methodist History 1807-2002*, self-published in 2002. Rev. Fudge used Conference newsletters, Conference minutes and Trustee notes to walk through the three regional Conferences down through the years.

In the PMC USA until recent times the pastoral placement device was known as the Itinerant System.<sup>31</sup> This old name for a more recent practice refers to the way settled clergy discover what parsonage will serve as their home for one, two, sometimes three years. Recently, though, the length of pastoral stay has increased as churches are granted the power to hold on to the pastors they like for decades.

The Itinerant System used to mean, not short terms for settled clergy measured in years, but more of a circuit system, in which a preacher is assigned to a territory for months, or as much as a year. The preacher would travel to the different churches in the circuit over a month or two, preaching the same sermon as many as six times before different audiences in different regions. During the week the itinerant was free to go to other towns within the territory to start small groups that would eventually become churches, most likely under a different itinerant assigned to that circuit at the Quarterly Meeting. At the local level, pastoral care was the responsibility of lay persons.

Over time, mature preachers desired to settle down in one church. The Itinerant System was for the young preachers who had few sermons, but great zeal in travelling around to nurture the believers and save new believers. Preachers from all cultures and regions could find themselves stationed in a circuit hundreds of miles from their hometown, but the novelty of a new preacher overcame any qualms an audience may have had, and the eccentricity of preachers from different parts of the nation was actually an attraction and not a hindrance to church growth.

Dr. Charles Tyrrell describes the decline of the Primitive Methodist Churches of Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa:

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<sup>31</sup> Actually in the USA, the Western District of the PMC voted to change the name from the Itinerant System to the Invitational System in 1883. The name, "Itinerant System" remained in use, though.

Gone were the days when the zealous layman trudged through dust and snow to minister to scattered handfuls of the faithful. This development was significant since it altered the basic concept of Primitive Methodism. ... The new circuit arrangement brought modifications in the work schedules of the pastors. Sermon preparation became a more demanding task. The minister now had to prepare one or two sermons each week to be delivered before the same congregation.<sup>32</sup>

Several factors can be blamed for the lack of growth in a small denomination – the focus on maintaining a building rather than prayer meetings or revivals; the archaic organizational structures and outdated worship styles – but this must also be considered: pastors focus on members, not unbelievers.

### **Dissatisfaction with Status Quo**

Rebels tend to be selfish. We saw this in William Hammett and Nicholas Snethen, who left the Methodist Episcopal Church because of Francis Asbury's high-handedness: Asbury wanted his preachers to move about presenting the gospel. Hammett and Snethen wanted to provide a settled home for their spouses, in a predictable parish ministry.

At one time the Establishment called for missioning preachers and resulted in outreach growth. As settled ministry became the norm the Establishment shifted to a system that did what was felt to be best for the members, not the outsiders.

Now, a rebel must overcome selfishness and fight to bring the gospel to outsiders. Presenting the gospel to the lost requires an uphill climb against the mudslide of members who pay clergy to meet local needs. The previous recipients of grace demand the talents, skills, energy and time of all those who are otherwise most qualified to present the gospel

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<sup>32</sup> Charles W. Tyrrell, *Steeple on the Prairie: A Pen Sketch of Midwestern Primitive Methodism*, (Wilkes-Barre, PA: The Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America, 1987), 84.

to the lost in a way that is good news to the hearers. Preachers know that the lost still need to hear, but the message becomes rote as all creative energies are poured into entertaining the members of a parish. Today's innovators are not honored as heroes, but demonized as unconcerned for our little family. Not being witness to others experiencing a radical conversion, our young people wander from the innocuous faith until the only way they can return is through a radical conversion, which is unlikely to be offered.<sup>33</sup> Settled pastors have become the Establishment, like those who strove to block the ministries of men like Dow, Whitefield, and Clowes.

### **Controlled Chaos and Cheap Labor**

An early struggle in the Primitive Methodist Connexion in England was between the Midlanders who were part of the Free-gospel movement and the Evangelists who were willing to leave their jobs and serve as missionaries, but needed some means of paying their living expenses. Itinerant ministry was unstable. Churches had new teaching every week, and different itinerants were assigned annually, or even quarterly. To become like the other churches and pastors, and as our itinerants aged, The PMC built parsonages and took on parish ministry, but with transfers every one to three years. Now we have completely stifled the itinerant system by ministries of decades.

Because of this there is almost no cross-pollination. Pastors are placed in congregations that they most resemble. Even the intermixing of ethnicity is discouraged in the church that is the most segregated organization in today's world.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tyrrell, 125.

<sup>34</sup> Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 160.

William Clowes was earning twice the normal wage working half as many hours at his family's business. When he left the porcelain industry to be a missionary for the young Primitive Methodist Church, his earnings dropped to less than 80% of the wage of a common laborer of his day. This was a struggle, and he soon used up his savings and he and his wife had to make sacrifices, but Clowes started churches along the Trent and Humber Rivers which became stalwarts of the denomination. Similar sacrifices are made today, but not for growing a church that could eventually support a settled ministry. Rather, sacrifices are made to serve a congregation that may never be able to adequately support a ministry family. The small church expects a full-time pastor, but can't pay young pastors what they need, and will not allow the messiness of new believers to take up financial responsibility for the church and its leadership.

### **Democracy's Need for Leadership**

The paradox of democracy rises up to bite the church. We wish to be unique, like everybody else. We want to be in charge and to have a vote, but we use our vote to elect someone who does our thinking and other hard work for us. A democracy depends on its leaders, not its voters.

In the early days lay people ran the church. Now clergy run the church and complain about needing to mobilize the laity. As John Maxwell complains, there is one minister and a hundred leaders, when there should be one leader and a hundred ministers.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Maxwell has written several books on leadership in the church and in business. At a seminar in Allentown, Pennsylvania in January, 1987, this author was struck by this statement by Maxwell about the church having many leaders when it needs many ministers.

Lorenzo Dow did not pretend to be a leader of people: he was a motivator of people then he left town. If a challenged group of people did nothing to implement Dow's message in their town, Dow had wasted his time there, but his movement forward demanded of locals that they take responsibility for change in light of Dow's message to them. That is the Point of Cross-Pollination, and the Power of the Dow Factor.

### **The Power of the Dow Factor**

Among churches that have no educational facilities available, the Dow factor could bring growth by reintroducing bi-vocational lay people who have a single message that is shared among several churches of diverse cultural background. We can take steps within our churches to weed out grossly cultural details, making room for diverse expressions of faith. We can relieve the preachers (not pastors) of responsibility for generating new and interesting teaching, and allow them to cultivate a single, inspiring message that is shared with several congregations and before newly assembled groups of not-yet-believers. Those who are called by God to engage in local parish ministry would oversee the men and women raised up as small group leaders to train clusters of new and mature believers, who make up a larger congregation. This is the model that most churches use, but the churches that profit from Dow Factor practices will start from the bottom up with new believers rather than from an educated clergy down. A top-down model works when the system avoids sclerosis. A bottom-up system is often ineffective, except for snapping a hardened organization back into healthy activity. When the monarchy caused hardening of the Anglican Church, the Methodists and other off-shoots brought England back to health.

As we will see in part three, Dow's insistence on Wesleyan Arminianism was tempered in the background with a mixture of Evangelical Calvinism. This mix of "whosever will" introduction into the faith with "elect unto salvation" discipleship is the combination that can bring our established churches back into vibrant stability. In part three we will look at some psychological implications about individuals and groups, consider Edwards' explanation of our need for an experience, and examine this interesting approach that combines Arminian and Calvinist strengths to produce a solid overall church independent of intellectual giftedness.

## PART III

### THE CYCLE OF REVIVAL AND HARD-HEARTEDNESS



## INTRODUCTION

Revival and Reform will be necessary as long as the gravity of indwelling sin pulls each individual off the course of godliness.<sup>1</sup> This gravitational pull results in hard-heartedness and an addiction to mindless and harmful activities. We engage in behavior and thought patterns that damage our relationships. We wander farther from the Lord and become enmeshed in the net of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Old, successful vaccines no longer work on the mutated strains of sin, and a creative evangelist must apply the gospel in a new medium to bring the patient back from the brink of death. The hearts of many grow cold, and new sinners are born every day, so the evangelist and the nurturing church have their work cut out for them.

This paper has directed a spotlight on one evangelist from the early years of the nineteenth century – Lorenzo Dow. In the first part of this paper Dow's character traits were emphasized: eccentricity and/or novelty; unwillingness to conform to the guidelines of a nurturing, established church; and his habit of constantly moving to fresh areas with a challenge to his hearers to attempt godliness and spiritual discipline.

In part two the evangelist's audience was examined. The pattern was noted: a dissatisfied group leaving the parent body to form a new body, then eventually becoming enough like the parent body to rejoin the family. The separated bodies that "lasted the longest" were those that incorporated a culture of renewal, perhaps through a solid

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<sup>1</sup> Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 42. In addition to explaining why sin pulls us away from God, Lovelace also summarizes the *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, by Jonathan Edwards – "it exalted Jesus Christ, attacked the kingdom of darkness, honored the Scriptures, promoted sound doctrine and involved an outpouring of love toward God and man."

training program; the habit of re-energizing church members at an institutionalized annual camp meeting, or exposure to a revivalist in other ways; or because of a regular influx of newly converted sinners. The hardening of spiritual arteries was pre-empted by a prescribed newness of life. These churches became part of an overall Evangelical movement based on the good news of the Bible, and a culture of individual and corporate confrontation with a vital God.

The subject of the third part of this thesis is the individual convert, and the message that converts the individual and keeps her in the fold. In chapter nine, four experts will be consulted in a quest to better understand the sinner/convert: What does Revival look like in the individual convert? What is the individual looking for in joining a religious group? What internal forces (the Holy Spirit, or the person's sub-conscious) influence a convert to take the step of faith, and what do we make of spiritual desires today?

In chapter ten Lorenzo Dow's home-spun solutions for overcoming the gravity of sin's pull away from God will be compared to the Wesleyan-Arminian method of conversion and discipleship, and a New Light Calvinist model for regular outreach and discipleship within the ministry of the church.

These chapters, like the other chapters of this thesis, will proceed upon various presuppositions – assumptions that this paper will not attempt to prove:

- The existence of the One God.
- His existence as Three Persons.
- The creation of humanity in the image of God.
- The universal destructive consequences of sin.
- The prevenient gift of God to call individuals to Himself.
- The effort of God to redeem humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ.
- The reconciling and guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer.
- The ongoing refining power of Holy Scriptures within the growing disciple.

Other presuppositions will become obvious, if they have not already.

As for sources: Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley are authorities in the Evangelical tradition, and no apology will be offered for reference to their work. William James, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Gustav Jung are widely recognized authorities, though outside the Evangelical tradition – and their work is referenced to demonstrate various points about individuals as potential converts to Christianity. The following apology is offered: it is the author's understanding that the Evangelical Church in the last centuries has been bogged down with controversy to the exclusion of attention paid to hurting sinners, whose cries for help have been answered by those who study the soul. If the work of psychologists or psychiatrists has become popular it is because of weaknesses in the church. The church can still learn from those who have devoted their lives to the study of soul care.

As for the great debate between proponents of the sovereignty of God and the free will of humans, it is acknowledged that Arminians and Calvinists are saying different things and there is a definite need for making theological distinctions. Simultaneously, Arminians and Calvinists are saying similar things in slightly different ways, and, like Saint Augustine, Jean Calvin offered a helpful system for the church to raise up godly disciples of Christ, and this helpful system has been ransacked by friends and enemies. It is the author's understanding that Wesley and Edwards both offered the church a middle way that incorporated good news from the Bible into a method for training individuals in

righteousness. The church today would best be served by incorporating the biblical and pastoral best of what has become two streams of Evangelical thought.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is the author's experience that many who proclaim the "doctrines of grace" have never read or studied Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. There has to be a post-Edwards, pre-Hodge expression of Calvinism that is based on Calvin, and not the counter-remonstrance. Likewise, it is the author's experience that many who claim to honor the free will of mankind have gotten much of their material from the Remonstrance, and not from James Arminius himself. Is humanity really as free as we claim?

## CHAPTER 9

### SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHAT WE NEED FOR REVIVAL

Lorenzo Dow carried on a Wesleyan tradition: the outright condemnation of Calvinists and anything smacking of election. Just as Calvinists accuse Arminians of denying the sovereignty of God, Arminians have scandalized Calvinists as elitists because of the doctrine of double predestination.<sup>1</sup> This doctrine is seen to contradict the many “whosoever will” verses in the New Testament. John Wesley fomented great division between himself and George Whitefield over this issue, and could not abide the possibility that some could not be saved.<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Dow mocked Predestinarians as “A-double L-part” men.<sup>3</sup>

This presumed incompatibility between Wesley and Whitefield has a bearing on our revival efforts. After all, if all may be redeemed, why do some neglect such great salvation? And if the believer is eternally secure, why do some seem to fall away? Since good evangelists are scarce, why do we not profile the potential candidates for salvation, and only present the gospel to those we perceive to be elect unto salvation and request of the damned that they stay away and not clutter up our revival services with their unbelief, scoffing, and negativity regarding the things of God? Beyond the testimony of the new convert, how can we know that the Lord has done a work of salvation within a professed

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<sup>1</sup> Double predestination is the teaching that God destines some people for heaven and others for hell. In our drive to eliminate hell from the vocabulary and portray God as only loving, and universal in his benevolence (while avoiding calling ourselves universalists), we tolerate God’s choosing to save some, but cannot abide a God who would choose to damn others.

<sup>2</sup> John Wesley’s controversy with Calvinism is documented in Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate*, (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Not only in his Chain, but throughout his Journal, Dow gets a lot of mileage out of his prepared speech debunking the possibility of Divine Election – the Bible had already declared that Jesus died for All, not Part, of humanity.

believer? This chapter will discuss the response of the new convert, and in the next chapter a model for discipleship that joins Wesleyan and Edwardian concerns will be presented.

### **Jonathan Edwards: What does revival look like in the individual?**

A moderating influence in this controversy was Jonathan Edwards, who believed that a person could choose life, but remained an ardent, if evangelical, Calvinist.<sup>4</sup> He was ranked among the New Lights who promoted the revival in America now known as the Great Awakening. Though he is best known for a sermon he preached titled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” and has thus gained a reputation as a fiery preacher, his writings were thoughtful and tightly reasoned.

Jonathan Edwards has written extensively on the topic of individual response to the grace of God in *Religious Affections*.<sup>5</sup> While John Wesley was the theologian-du-jour for American Methodists, Jonathan Edwards, along with George Whitefield, Theodore Frelinghuysen, and the Tennant brothers were the primary influence for Americans concerned about revival, long before the Methodists came in force to America. These New Lights created the environment of revival upon which Dow capitalized sixty years later. The challenges that Dow faced – hyper-independence among individual Methodists, unusual religious and physical reactions to salvation, questions about the authenticity of

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<sup>4</sup> Edwards was cautious, though, to insist that the Sovereign mercy of the Lord led individuals to repentance. His *Freedom of the Will*, Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, edited by Paul Ramsey, Volume I in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Perry Miller, General Editor, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957) was written to combat the surging Arminianism that gave mankind supposed power to believe independent of God’s calling.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, edited by John E. Smith, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 2, Harry Stout, General Editor, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959).

saving faith – were all addressed by Jonathan Edwards long before Methodism broke out of its stigma of loyalty to the Church of England.

Edwards is emphatic that true faith results in an affective response. The Holy Spirit is responsible to oversee an emotional reaction to the relief of the burden of sin wrought by the conversion of the soul. “There are false affections, and there are true. A man’s having much affection, don’t prove that he has any true religion: but if he has no affection, it proves that he has no true religion.”<sup>6</sup> Edwards calls for “light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart” – both heat AND light.<sup>7</sup> His definition of “hardness of heart” is the heart void of affection, and so, uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> He speaks of the religious history of New England – a time when being filled with vibrant, visible affection was seen as the sign of the Lord’s work in the soul – “a little while ago we were in the other extreme; there was a prevalent disposition to look upon all high religious affections, as eminent exercises of true grace, without much inquiring into the nature and source of those affections.”<sup>9</sup> But in the days of the Great Awakening, unfortunately, critics were disallowing all affective responses, even those suggestive of the Lord’s true grace working in the affected individual.

Edwards advocated for hymnody and verse, not limiting teaching to prose, because lyrical expressions “have a tendency to move our affections.”<sup>10</sup> And it is not enough for men to have “good commentaries,” but God has also appointed “a particular and lively application of his Word, to men, in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect

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<sup>6</sup> Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 121

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 120

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, 118

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, 119

<sup>10</sup> Edwards, 115

sinner.”<sup>11</sup> Edwards was concerned what “great cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are no more affected with the great things of religion.”<sup>12</sup> Thus Edwards ends the first section of his work on *Religious Affections* – while affections are not evidence of the work of the Lord in one’s life, lack of affections are evidence of lack of the work of the Lord in one’s life.

In the second section of his work on *Religious Affections*, Edwards offers twelve false proofs of the work of God in the heart. These twelve proofs are false because we cannot say certainly that the Lord is the author of the work in one’s life simply because one or more of these “evidences” are present. The twelve unreliable signs:

- The affection is “great” or “raised high” (I sing louder than you).
- The affection has a great effect on the body (I’m out of control).
- The recipient becomes fluent in religious conversation (the right words).
- The affected one seems not to be inaugurating the affectation.
- The affected person is able to quote much Scripture.
- The person’s words and deeds seem loving.
- The person manifests a multiplicity of affections.
- Comforts, joys, awakenings and/or convictions follow a certain pattern.
- A person becomes zealously engaged in “duties of worship.”
- A person becomes actively disposed in praising and glorifying God.
- A person feels it is from God, and feels they are in a good state.
- The affected person is appealing to other believers, and the church congratulates itself that they have “gained their heart.”<sup>13</sup>

The church should look for several of these signs to take place, but because of the ease with which these signs are duplicated falsely, there is great danger in holding these forth as certain evidence of the work of the Lord in the heart of a sinner.

Despite Lorenzo Dow’s bemusement with Quakers who denied the possibility of being overcome by “the Jerks,” then subsequently became subject to uncontrolled

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<sup>11</sup> Edwards, 115

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, 122.

<sup>13</sup> All these reasons are summarized from the second section of *Religious Affections*, 127-190.



jerked, Dow still was easily swayed by many of these false signs. Not only his converts, but also his friends, family members, colleagues, and peers proved to be a deceptive influence in Dow's ministry. He misread, and was deceived by many. Dow himself was often self-deceived by his own sense of strong spirituality.

Edwards devotes the longest section of his treatise – section three – to the positive, distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections. Edwards begins this section with a stern warning:

'Tis not God's design that men should obtain assurance in any other way, than by mortifying corruption, and increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. And although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means, by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination, as by action.<sup>14</sup>

The first sign that affections are truly spiritual and gracious is that they "arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are *spiritual*, *supernatural* and *divine*."<sup>15</sup> Edwards explains this distinction at great length, but the concept can be summarized thus: spiritual desires are set against desires that are natural; Christians are called "spiritual" because they are born of the Spirit and enjoy the Spirit's indwelling and holy influence. Affections are supernatural in that no natural person can manufacture these desires. Signs are genuine when they are of a divine origin. The Holy Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, etc.<sup>16</sup> While a person may express joy in unusual ways, the expression of joy would not be self-exalting when influenced by the Holy Spirit – spiritual, supernatural and divine.

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<sup>14</sup> Edwards, 195.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, 197.

<sup>16</sup> The Bible, Galatians 5:22-4.

Of course, this leads to the second sign – Edwards would demand that the ground of affections is the “transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest.”<sup>17</sup>

Related to this is the third sign – holy affections are founded on what Edwards refers to as “the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things.”<sup>18</sup> Moral excellency is not referring to conformity to certain rules, but a willed, desired holiness that shows itself to be of divine origin. “Holiness comprehends all the virtue of a good man, his love to God, his gracious love to men, his justice, his charity, and bowels of mercies, his gracious meekness and gentleness, and all other true Christian virtues that he has, belong to his holiness.”<sup>19</sup> True love of God begins with love of God’s Holiness. We cannot love any other virtue of the Lord until His Holiness is loved. The loveliness of God’s perfections arise from His Holiness. All beauty of God and His creation are founded on the Holiness of God. A holy love has a holy object.<sup>20</sup>

The fourth sign is a dependence on the mind’s being enlightened, “rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.”<sup>21</sup> Proper, biblical preaching and teaching yields true affections, as the listener is informed of the spiritual, supernatural and divine desire for our redemption. Natural men cannot have the spiritual man’s affections or sensations. If the gospel is hidden, it is hidden to the lost, because the Lord has blinded them.<sup>22</sup> Edwards makes a distinction between new doctrine and old doctrine that has been made new to us. As Calvin, in his *Institutes* reminds us, it is not the Holy

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<sup>17</sup> Edwards, 240.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, 253.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, 255.

<sup>20</sup> Edwards, 260.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards, 266.

<sup>22</sup> Edwards, 271, quoting The Bible, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

Spirit's job to come up with some new teaching, or to "coin some new kind of doctrine," but rather to seal within us the "very doctrine which is by the gospel."<sup>23</sup>

Jonathan Edwards gives as his fifth sign, the evidence that "truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things."<sup>24</sup> For the graced believer the deity of Christ and His incarnation are not problematic doctrinally.<sup>25</sup> This divine influence is not like the individual who has had doctrine drummed into him, like the "Mohametan" who believes because his father believed. Rather, the mind of the believer seems to be convinced, even though the natural man has a prejudice against the things of God.<sup>26</sup> Hindrances to God's truth are broken away and the things of God are accepted by the believer as the Holy Spirit convinces her of these truths.

Sixthly, "gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation."<sup>27</sup> Edwards stresses that "Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable form of heart."<sup>28</sup> So this is not the pretense of humility, but an actual, and even sudden realization of the falsehood of one's heart.

The last of the signs (seven through twelve) are these:

- Gracious affections are attended with a change of nature.
- Gracious affections are attended with a "dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus."<sup>29</sup>
- Gracious affections soften the heart.
- Gracious affections are characterized by beautiful symmetry and proportion.
- Gracious affections increase the appetite for more grace, and are not satisfied.

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<sup>23</sup> Edwards, 278, quoting Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 1, chapter 9, number 1.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, 291.

<sup>25</sup> Edwards, 292.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, 307.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, 311.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, 311.

<sup>29</sup> Edwards, 344.

- Gracious affections result in fruit – practice.

Edwards offered a solid explanation of religious affections with the purpose of encouraging those “feelings” that are based on the human reaction to the Holy Spirit’s work within the new believer, while cautioning against those expressions which are manufactured by the sinful mind of humanity. This forces the question, why did not Lorenzo Dow and other Methodist itinerants employ this teaching to avoid the indiscretions the Methodists of the nineteenth century were subject to? Not long after the release of *Religious Affections*, John Wesley released this book as part of his Christian Library.<sup>30</sup> Did Dow and other Methodists ignore Edwards? Wesley strove to make it available, but his editorial pen may well have decimated the strong bias toward the sovereignty of God in Edwards’ original work. Could the Great Awakening have been extended well into the nineteenth century if the preachers carrying the gospel had been better informed by the solid teaching of Edwards? The effects of the Revival in the individual became like a trumpet that makes an unclear sound. So many “converts” felt the need to manufacture a self-induced reaction to the gospel message that it is hard to say how many Americans or Britons were genuinely delivered from sin. This deficiency goes far in explaining the slow fade of Methodism into insipid ineffectiveness. While the

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<sup>30</sup> I am indebted to the introduction to the Yale edition of *Religious Affections* by John E. Smith. His summary was most helpful, and he includes a comparison of the original with some of the other editions that were published by individuals other than Edwards. It was a common practice to republish another author’s work back in the eighteenth century. Wesley released a common man’s version of the great works of the Christian Faith that were available to him. He strove to make volumes available for a penny apiece. The version of Wesley’s Christian Library that John E. Smith uses is from 1801 – ten years after Wesley’s death – so clearly a publisher released Wesley’s version of Edwards’ work in hopes of profitable sales. While Wesley’s Christian Library was not available to me (I haven’t held a set since 1980, when I was able to view the library held by Historic Saint George’s Methodist Church in Philadelphia), one wonders if Wesley watered down the intricacies of Edwards when it comes to affections that seem to disparage Wesley’s strong Arminian perception of Prevenient Grace and the affections that result.

descendants of Puritanism ignored the work of the New Light Jonathan Edwards, Methodists had every reason to uphold his teaching and to put into practice the explanation of conversion that Edwards attempted to make available to the Methodists who took up the baton of Revival thirty-plus years later. The evangelist today can relieve the church of great confusion by demanding that new believers conform to the specifics Edwards required of those claiming to have enjoyed gracious affections. Thanks to William James we know what converts in the nineteenth century were looking for in their religion.

**William James: What is the individual looking for in religion?**

James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* is a legitimate source for this quest into the desire of the seeker. William James has analyzed hundreds of testimonies of converts to Christianity. While evangelicals would disagree with many of his conclusions, we can learn from his assessments, and the extent of his research exceeds any other source available. Though his book was written a century after Dow's peak, James is a worthy source because he has interviewed those who are the fruit of the Great Awakening. As Dow's influence was instituted into American Revivalism, signs of his DNA took hold of the experiences of Christians caught up in the revival.

William James was not able to embrace the wave of revival that swept across America in the second half of the nineteenth century, but he recognized the innate human need to believe that "beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will

do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step.”<sup>31</sup> Many secular thinkers are able to admit this – it is a concession to the popularity of religion as the “opiate” of the people (to use a term coined by Karl Marx). James is able to admit, “reality is far too rich and complex to be comprehended by a single individual, so that we can never expect every one to have the same religious experience.”<sup>32</sup> Yet there are similarities in the testimonies James gathered.

After connecting religion and neurology, and setting the bounds for his analysis, James discusses the phenomenon of “the reality of the unseen.”<sup>33</sup> A rational person should be above the need for the supernatural, and base his thought on “definitely statable abstract principles;...definite facts of sensation;...definite hypotheses based on such facts; and...definite inferences logically drawn.”<sup>34</sup> So how do we account for those who base their lives on that which is unseen? James politely divides humanity into “the constitutionally somber and the constitutionally sanguine,” who “are bound to emphasize opposite aspects of what lies before their eyes.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, at the conclusion of his study, James is able to dismiss the “irrational” believer as able to overlook facts and place faith in the unseen.

Before discussing his study of religious converts, James notes that a “healthy-mindedness” has developed with Christianity “within the last fifty years” of his age – the liberalism that denies eternal punishment, and tamps down the rhetoric of hell and other enthusiastic notions of conversion. He credits Evolution for this development – “The idea

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<sup>31</sup> William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), 449.

<sup>32</sup> James, 463.

<sup>33</sup> James, Lecture 3, 57-77.

<sup>34</sup> James, 74.

<sup>35</sup> James, 76.

of a universal evolution lends itself to a doctrine of general meliorism and progress which fits the religious needs of the healthy-minded so well that it seems almost as if it might have been created for their use.”<sup>36</sup> But then James scoffs at this “religion of relaxation” and mind-cure literature, “which is so moonstruck with optimism and so vaguely expressed that an academically trained intellect finds it almost impossible to read it at all.”<sup>37</sup> So James is not biased toward revivalism, nor is he about to side with liberal theology. Rather he promotes a science, or thought-based philosophy of life.

Nevertheless his book presents an analysis of conversionism that is non-judgmental until his concluding lectures.<sup>38</sup> He compares Wesleyan teaching with that of Martin Luther, and notes that a common image of the revivalist preacher is the man slipping down a precipice who grabs a branch, but then finds his hands losing their grip. He lets go and drops a mere six inches. The man would have been fine to have allowed himself to slip, but our need to cling prevents us from discovering that the “fall” is actually part of God’s plan to save us. The trauma of the experiences related by the converts in James’ study could have been avoided if they had viewed life rationally and not as a dramatic adventure from which the Lord must rescue them. Obviously we are aware of the sinfulness of each person, and the need we all have to be delivered by the Lord, but James is able to explain away our conversion process rationally.

For James, converts – believers who have benefited from the revivalist tradition – are engaging in what he calls, “primitive thought,” which is a belief in a personal God

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<sup>36</sup> James, 89.

<sup>37</sup> James, 93.

<sup>38</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience* is the result of William James’ Gifford Lecture Series in 1900 and 1901. The book, a compilation of twenty of these lectures, was published in 1902.

who answers prayer and delivers both from sin and from calamity.<sup>39</sup> Evangelicals are not as glib in dismissing our need for God – it’s not paranoia if we really are lost in sin. James recommends that we get over our personal dilemma and “up and act for righteousness, and forget that you ever had relations with sin.”<sup>40</sup> Of course many of us have tried this “pull oneself up by one’s bootstraps” routine with disappointing results.

James explains what converts are looking for in religion by noting that there “are people for whom evil means only a maladjustment with *things*,” while “there are others for whom evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nature.” This wrongness requires “a supernatural remedy.” According to James, “the Latin races have leaned more towards the former way of looking upon evil, as made up of ills and sins in the plural, removable in detail;” while “the Germanic races have tended rather to think of Sin in the singular, and with a capital S, as of something ineradicably ingrained in our natural subjectivity, and never to be removed by any superficial piecemeal operations.”<sup>41</sup> He does not say that people seeking conversion are wrong, just that we look at our sins, or our Sin, differently from the more intelligent person. Of course this difference in perception may be explaining the difference between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and not simply the difference between the religious and the enlightened.

For James, the convert suffers from a lower pain threshold – a weaker conscience – due to a learned anhedonia, or inability to enjoy life.<sup>42</sup> This difference, like the difference between the Epicurean and the Stoic, is what has fostered the notion of the

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<sup>39</sup> James, 112-15.

<sup>40</sup> James, 119.

<sup>41</sup> James, 124-5.

<sup>42</sup> James, 126-32.



Sick Soul – the idea that one must be delivered, converted, redeemed and/or saved. James sees this as evidence of a divided self – the healthy minded only need to be born once, but the sick souls need to be born twice in order to be happy.<sup>43</sup> The healthy minded are “born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well balanced from the outset.”<sup>44</sup> James offers testimony of an individual who suffered from shyness, for whom an “unkind look or word has availed to make me shrink into myself as a snail into its shell.”<sup>45</sup> James also notes that the Nova Scotia evangelist, Henry Alline, suffered from this ‘divided mind’ before he was led to the Lord and experienced “inner unity and peace.”<sup>46</sup> Converts studied by James frequently refer to lack of peace before their experience of conversion, but like converts today would suggest that the healthy-minded are just kidding themselves.

The divided self that James observes in the few who need conversion is what the Bible refers to as the natural man. We all have divided selves, and we all need conversion. James defines conversion thus: “converted means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy.”<sup>47</sup> James summarizes the dilemma of the pre-convert this way: “We have a thought, or we perform an act, repeatedly, but on a certain day the real meaning of the thought peals through us for the first time, or the act has suddenly turned into a moral impossibility.” There are dead feelings and dead or cold beliefs, and there are hot ones, and when one grows hot and

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<sup>43</sup> James, 151.

<sup>44</sup> James, 152.

<sup>45</sup> James, 153.

<sup>46</sup> James, 157-59.

<sup>47</sup> James, 177.

alive within us, “everything has to re-crystalize about it.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed the examples James uses of conversion testimonies often carry this theme of the convert feeling a fresh awareness of the truth of something learned long ago, and the newness of that old truth causes a submission before God. The result is a change that cannot be accounted for by normal human practices or attempts to change. The convert may testify to having tried to change for some time, but after the experience – what the Bible calls being “born again” – the convert is empowered to walk away from harmful practices, and the universalness of God’s oversight makes sense, and the convert desires to be a child of God willingly.

Lorenzo Dow seemed to have a sixth sense about what people were looking for when they came to his meetings, and then when they experienced conversion. In many cases the church today, and the pastors who deal with the care of already-believing souls, have lost touch with what not-yet-believers are looking for and are in need of. Unfortunately those who are studying such things today are predominantly unbelievers themselves, and, like James, are happy to study, but are unable to relate to, lost people.

### **Sigmund Freud: Is it the Holy Spirit, or the sub-conscious that leads to faith?**

Lorenzo Dow based much of his life on dreams, especially in the early years of his itinerant ministry. Life decisions were made based on what he experienced during his sleep. John Wesley called Dow to preach in a dream, and the prophet Nathan appeared to him with the warning that he would die in his 22<sup>nd</sup> year if he did not heed the call to preach, and he “obeyed” these authority figures. His travel to Ireland is what delivered him from the deadly fate and allowed him to see his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. We are able to look on

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<sup>48</sup> James, 177.

Dow from the outside and see that he most likely was not visited by these dead saints, but we can appreciate how his mind processed his ruminations regarding ministry obedience.

Sigmund Freud introduced us to the importance of dreams as a way for the subconscious to process thought during sleep.<sup>49</sup> While we know quite a bit about the need for undisturbed sleep, and the stage known as REM sleep, much of Freud's observation is still valid today. One of the steps we believing Christians have taken in these enlightened days is to perceive dreams and imaginations as not necessarily divine visitations, but rather necessary visionings of thoughts we must process in our attempt to obey the Lord. While we still resonate with Paul's obedience to the heavenly vision, few of us are self-absorbed enough to imagine that our dreams are commands directly from God.

Freud introduced us to the notion of archetypes in dreams. Carl Jung developed this topic,<sup>50</sup> but basically archetypes refer to universal images that stand for something in dreams. Images such as snakes or burning buildings can be applied universally in the human effort to interpret what our minds are trying to say to us through our dreams. Other images, such as John Wesley, a hero for the Methodists, or the prophet Nathan, an image of God's revelation to King David, can stand for authority figures that assist us to make difficult decisions that seem to have no support from living authority figures.

Freud considers the distinguishing psychological characteristics of dreams – particularly, how our thoughts are transformed into hallucinations that come to us during our sleep, and why dreams seemed separated from us. Since the practical use of the functional MRI brain scan, practitioners are able to discern what part of the brain “lights

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<sup>49</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams: The Complete and Definitive Text*, Translated and Edited by James Strachey, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams*, in the volume entitled, *The Undiscovered Self, with Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

up” during certain thoughts, and even during dreams. For instance, scientists today are able to speculate that certain chemicals stimulate parts of the brain that make God seem real (thalamus, parietal lobe) and how meditation stimulates parts of the brain that cause us to lose a sense of self and feel as though we are being absorbed into God.<sup>51</sup> Freud did not have that ability, so he was not able to give physical evidence, but his observations were remarkably solid for his time.

Freud saw much of the dream state as wish fulfillment.<sup>52</sup> For Lorenzo Dow this may mean that he wanted to be a travelling evangelist, in spite of the opposition of his Methodist Elders, so his dreams came to him as confirmation that his perception of God’s call was correct. When Dow dreamt of John Wesley or the prophet Nathan,<sup>53</sup> he was giving himself permission to disobey the advice or determinations of authorities, without impugning himself. After all, the late John Wesley commissioned Lorenzo Dow!

Though it is rare today, it is still possible to hear a Christian refer to a decision as having been based on a dream. Freud would like for us to respect our dreams as means of processing our thoughts while asleep – and often we are too distracted while awake to put considered thought into issues we face – but we have to treat our dreams with the same standard that we apply to our conscious thoughts. The advice of others has a bearing on our final decision, and our sense of God’s will as revealed generally in the Bible needs to have an influence, but we cannot conclude that our dreams or visions are demands that the Lord makes on us. The Lord is given credit for issues that come up in our

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew Newberg, MD, and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books Trade Paperbacks, 2009), 54.

<sup>52</sup> Freud, 147-57 & 550-71.

<sup>53</sup> See Freud, 363 for a discussion of symbols in dreams.

subconscious, and this self-centered form of decision-making can lead to dangerous entanglements for the child of God. Yet even these God is able to redeem for His glory.

### **Carl Jung: What do we make of spiritual desires today?**

Carl Jung cannot be construed as a revivalist, but his writings seem more sympathetic to the evangelical community than those of either William James or Sigmund Freud. Though a student of Freud, his writings come more into the contemporary age than Vienna's psychoanalyst. Jung takes time to develop the predicament of modern man in *The Undiscovered Self*.<sup>54</sup> Jung sees himself living in an age of turmoil, when "men's eyes turn with anxious hope to the future, and when anticipations, utopias, and apocalyptic visions multiply."<sup>55</sup> Since science has debunked much of what people at one time "knew" of themselves, and since few are able to acquaint themselves with the scientific explanation of what takes place within the body, or the mind for that matter, an individual's self-knowledge is minimal,<sup>56</sup> and often dependent upon scholarly or popular articles or self-help literature. Having lost our dependence upon "witch-doctor" explanations of bodily functions, people look to science to make predictions and diagnoses regarding the human condition. Even spiritual questions are answered – or the attempt is made to answer – by science or TV authorities.

Because of the mass appeal of our media today, authorities are forced to generalize in their presentation of our problems and their solutions.<sup>57</sup> Our leaders find

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<sup>54</sup> Carl G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self, with Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990 & 2010), reprint of the 1956 edition.

<sup>55</sup> Jung, *Self*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Jung, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Jung, 8.

themselves leading larger and larger masses, and individuals today are absorbed into the society of millions who, because of today's technology, can be organized into units.<sup>58</sup> A collective opinion has developed, and the state is turned into a "quasi-animate personality from whom everything is expected."<sup>59</sup>

Religion is now poised in opposition to the state. Individuals join religion at will, rather than being lumped in geographically, as they are under the State. The individuality that is lost with submission to the State is returned to the religious person, who sees religion as based primarily on the personal experience of the individual. Thus religion becomes the representation of the irrational, while the State bases its functionality on the new high priest, Science.

As long as religion refuses to cooperate with the State, it maintains its irrational but critical role as the individual's expression of uniqueness in a nation of sameness. So within religion a dichotomy develops between "creedal" and "expressive" forms<sup>60</sup> of the religion. Any pronouncement from "on high" which is based on traditional or cemented truth is seen as an effort by the church to imitate the State, while individuals hoping to avoid the loss of self that submission to the state requires seek out those denominations that are uniquely similar to their own expression of faith.<sup>61</sup> Religion, especially those forms calling for a salvation "experience," look for individuals to be able to articulate this unique, necessary experience, and hold this up as a requirement for involvement in the particular instituted religion. Brass bands and banners call the individual to loyalty to the form of religion, and members are expected to manifest love and commitment to the

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<sup>58</sup> Jung, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Jung, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Or "cognitive" and "affective" forms.

<sup>61</sup> Jung, 13.

unique religion – the church – of which individuals are ‘members.’<sup>62</sup> And so, as with the State, the individual sees his ‘self’ being absorbed into the community of believers.

This unhealthy phenomenon is the result of a “tail wagging the dog” situation: “People call faith the true religious experience, but they do not stop to consider that actually it is a secondary phenomenon arising from the fact that something happened to us in the first place which instilled πίστις (faith) into us – that is, trust and loyalty.”<sup>63</sup>

It is for this reason that we are in a much more complex environment than that in which Lorenzo Dow found himself in 1800 – in a young democracy charging toward the exploitation of all opportunities present and future. Our frontiers have been explored and colonized, and growth by exploitation is no longer an easy option for us. Prosperity is difficult to achieve, and innovation is scarce in our populated world. Much of our individuality and religious expression has been tried and found wanting, and religious leaders are not able to clarify self-identity to the satisfaction of today’s audience.

The weakness of the church today is this very inability to explain the self to our listeners. Jung warns, “Resistance to the organized mass can be effected only by the man who is as well organized in his individuality as the mass itself.”<sup>64</sup> Leaders must be comfortable “in their skin.” And the church is so busy trying to get members to conform to the norms that make the denomination unique among thousands of other choices of religious expression, that there is no time left to train individual members in the exploration of personal uniqueness, or even the “renewing of the mind” that Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1-2.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jung, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Jung, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Jung, 34.

<sup>65</sup> The Bible, Romans 12:1-2.

Jung is not saying that the church is dead as an institution, but rather that it must return to the meditation of its purpose, and a change of attitude towards the individual. The “facts of faith” will give the church an “extramundane” standpoint – biblical truth must be placed on the same high plain as the facts of science.<sup>66</sup>

Lorenzo Dow did not live in a world as complicated as our own. His listeners could be considered pre-modern while our age is post-modern.<sup>67</sup> Dow had a captive audience: nothing else was going on, and the entertainment-starved townspeople could always count on Lorenzo Dow to put on the show of the month at his revival and camp meetings. His books were on the best-seller list. Our neighbors have several hundred cable TV channels to choose from, and even though those channels may carry little genuine entertainment, people today are quite content to stay home and avoid hearing our weekly dose of godliness. Still, there must be some way we can acquaint our community with the grace of God. People today still care about spirituality. Their perception of God may need theological tweeking, and the church may not be as relational as they expect, but the church is prepared to “friend up” a bit, and discipleship training can become the interrelational and fulfilling quest today’s common person is looking for. The church has a history of emphasizing the aspect of the gospel that becomes good news for the current society needs.

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<sup>66</sup> Jung, 35-6.

<sup>67</sup> Though they certainly would have been influenced by the Enlightenment.



## CHAPTER 10

### HOW DO WE COME ABOUT NEEDING REVIVAL? HOW DO WE GET IT?

This paper has presented Lorenzo Dow as a model for today's bearer of the good news of salvation. An assumption has been made: that we need someone today to carry good news.

Do we need revival today? We certainly need regular, fresh expressions of God's gospel, as in every age new sinners are born into the world and into the church; new sojourners from other lands appear outside the doors of our churches; those who may have heard before reach a crisis point in life where good news is attractive. We have to share good news.

But do we need revival? As noted before, the weight or gravity of sin pulls even the strongest believer away from the path of righteousness. Forgiveness and reconciliation are needed in the lives of the most stalwart disciple of Christ. Our hearts grow hard and need a gracious softening, and heresies creep in that must be purged from our pulpits, classrooms and study lounges. Christians grow weary in well-doing and we need a reminder of the grace of Christ.

Revival will always be needed. In the past our churches planned for annual revival meetings as the means for dealing with this heavy weight of sin which so easily besets us, but the regularity and uniformity of these meetings dulled the edge of the Sword of the Lord, and our sinful minds and hearts caused our gatherings to be ineffective. Recommitment became habitual and lost its meaning.

So how do we experience revival? Humility is the place to start: an admission that salvation is a daily journey, not a one-time event; daily confession of sin's grasp on us in

this sinful world; ceaseless prayer and meditation upon the truth of God's word; regular gathering with the saints to discuss the ins and outs of life; exposure to sound teaching; uplifting worship; envisioning the sharing of good news, then doing so; commitment of relationships to the Lord; doing all things as unto the Lord.

This chapter will present some of the resources Lorenzo Dow employed, particularly Wesleyan resources. The list will be expanded to include tools other traditions have made available to the church. Finally, Wesley's practical model will be modified to include these sound tools, and a final plea will be made to call the church back to the foundational tools that grow disciples, and that will serve the church in these post-modern times.

### **Dow's homespun solution for weakness of faith and hardness of heart**

The first part of this paper was devoted to the story of Lorenzo Dow, and several conclusions were drawn: Dow had a strong sense of "call;" he had a healthy disregard for the solidifying tendencies of Methodist leadership; his effectiveness depended on his constant movement from town to town. In addition, his financial support depended on his pamphlets and books – his "everyman's theology" approach to answering many of the spiritual questions of the day.

Lorenzo Dow teaches 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians to empower new believers to nurture a strong identity in Christ. Churches that are effective in outreach are training Christians to find the basis of their identity in Christ – the pursuit of happiness that *is* the American lifestyle disappoints us. Worship wars are only a small part of the quest for relevance within the church. While hymns can be used effectively in the relevant church, the

addiction to their use shows that a body of believers has renounced the call to present good news to all people, and has sunk into rigid sameness and debilitating comfort. The one-man-show style of the American pastorate must be abandoned, and individuals with divine gifting to shake up the neighborhood must travel among the grounded churches to guarantee fresh thinking and renewed resolve within the saints. In a healthy church, musicians who understand the new ways and appreciate the old ways will be nurtured in our churches, and will incorporate the best available means to glorify God, edify believers, and persuade people to come to Jesus.

Lorenzo Dow was able to accomplish this by first of all committing himself to service to the Lord and resolving to show disregard for the way things were supposed to be done. He was able to say things the way his hearers would have said them if they were the ones called by God to express those words. This folksy manner is what melted hearts and fostered desire among the frontier people to join with the Methodist societies Dow claimed to represent. These societies were the places where discipleship happened, but the initial commitment of members came from the robust preaching of Lorenzo Dow.

**The Spiritual Disciplines – Preach Faith Until You Have It.** One of the grounds of a solid body of believers is membership. The American church in 18<sup>th</sup> century New England struggled with this, and the Halfway Covenant was crafted to help maintain a church entity when many residents of a town could not honestly testify to a conversion experience. Eventually the members of a body must be unified behind the cross of Jesus Christ, with a witness of the good confession of being born again. However, for a short time in a church's life, and once the church is strong, for a short time in each individual

member's life, the principle John Wesley learned from the Moravians should be the paradigm: Wesley was on the brink of renouncing his good deeds and coming to salvation in Christ. He was speaking to a pietist about concerns of hypocrisy, when he was told, "Preach faith until you have it, then, because you have it, you can preach faith." This suggests two "faiths" – one leading to another. John Fletcher and Wesley debated the possibility of faith as a good work,<sup>1</sup> and Wesley would renounce the Stillness teachings of the Moravians not long after his own salvation,<sup>2</sup> but Peter Bohler's advice to a young, seeking John Wesley suits us well today: when we discover a promise of guidance from the Holy Spirit in the Bible, we should preach it up, and then wait to see what the Holy Spirit will do in our churches. There is something to be said for anticipation of God's work among believers, and a humble crying out for the same may be blessed by the Lord. At the very least, we must ask that the Lord take away the hardness of our hearts.

### **Scared Sensible: Edwards and Finney call for a verdict**

It is a great misfortune that many Americans today who have even heard the name "Jonathan Edwards" (most likely in a History of American Religion class at college) only know about his "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."<sup>3</sup> There is so much more to Edwards, and this particular sermon is highly untypical of his writing, but its popularity

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<sup>1</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 257-8.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate*, (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987), 27, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed this is the first of Edwards' writings this author was introduced to: my father gave me an old eight page newsprint copy of this sermon when I was still a teenager. Edwards preached this sermon at least twice: first at his Northampton, Massachusetts church, and then by invitation at a church in Enfield, CT. People were said to cry out for mercy from the Lord, and the Connecticut Valley awakening was enhanced by the harvest of souls that resulted from this sermon.

among secular professors today shows how effective it can be to graphically portray the precarious situation of the sinner dangling over the flames of God's wrath by a tiny spider thread. Though American evangelists overused this motif to the point of making it completely ineffective, and turning the style of Jeremiad into a mockery, Charles Finney was often effective in presenting the case for God against the sinner.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Historic Arminian Mindset to Jumpstart Revival**

This method of revival is cautiously recommended, but the Methodists were successful in dealing with sinners by this more humanistic approach. Some sinners are so distraught over the destructiveness of sin that surrendering to a Sovereign God is very appealing. Some others still have some fight left and the challenge to do the work of giving their life to a God who calls all to Himself remains attractive. Hopefully, solid Christian teaching will correct this situation, but some need to hear, "God is choosing you for Himself," and some need to hear, "God calls all people to Himself, so you qualify." It seems counter-biblical, but the Methodists brought a lot of hope to a lot of struggling people with their "whosoever will" message, and even this humanistic understanding can be presented in such a way that the Sovereignty of God is not compromised in the mind of the sinner. Many a movement of the Holy Spirit has been characterized by a democratic, "whosoever will may come" offer of eternal life.

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<sup>4</sup> In one of the lectures in Charles G. Finney, *Revivals of Religion*, (Virginia Beach, VA: CBN University Press, 1978), Finney discusses how the revivalist is to deal with careless sinners, as well as awakened sinners and convicted sinners. Finney stresses sobriety and plainness of speech, and even recommends bringing up the sinners personal sins.

## **The Remonstrant Articles and Methodical Evangelism**

An ongoing problem has consumed evangelical Christians since the 17<sup>th</sup> century – the Arminian-Calvinist controversy. Just when it seems the church has gotten over the argument and moved on, a new stream of seminarians comes along and the battle is resumed. This controversy has been distracting for the church, and most Christians can not understand why their leaders make such a fuss. Doctrine aside, it seems there are some complicating aspects that can be dealt with up front to simplify the war. First, it is the experience of this author that most young people on the Calvinist side of this controversy have never read Jean Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Granted it is not an easy read, and MacNeil's edition takes up two large volumes.<sup>5</sup> The famous TULIP, or 5 points of Calvinism are unfortunate, in that the five points are not Calvin's, but are rather a response to the sons of James Arminius and a friend of the family, Johannes Uitenbogaert, who were attempting to defend the honor of their father and close friend after his death, and proposed 5 points of Remonstrance in 1610, which led to the Contra-Remonstrants replacing all Arminian theologians after the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618. In the Remonstrance, the defenders of Arminius proposed 5 points to address such issues as God, man, salvation, the free church, and the governor of the state as head of the free church.<sup>6</sup> The Remonstrance was not a summation of the theology of James Arminius, just an answer to the National Synod of the States of Holland condemning Arminius in

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<sup>5</sup> The shorter 1536 version is still available. See: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536 edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984) 396 pp. Calvin's last version – much longer – is the 1559 edition, which now has been made available by Hendrickson Publishers in one volume. Still, with this convenience, few are seen to possess it. See John T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 Volumes, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), as volume XX of the Library of Christian Classics, and John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Translated by Henry Beveridge, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1971 & 1985), 318.

1608. While Arminians complain that Arminius was not heard, and his defenders were not regarded, the great tragedy of this was the fact that the theology of Jean Calvin was disregarded, and the summary of the Contra-Remonstrance against the 5 points presented by Uitenbogaert was taken as a full summary of the doctrines of grace proposed by Jean Calvin. Proclaimed Calvinists to this day are stuck with this argumentative tone and incomplete summation of Calvin's teaching.

Jonathan Edwards was convinced of the Sovereignty of God, yet he was enough of an evangelical to allow for a sinner to answer the call of the Almighty God to be saved. George Whitefield claimed to appreciate the doctrines of grace, but he called on people to respond. John Wesley could not get over this acknowledgement of Whitefield that God calls all men everywhere to repent – Wesley turned against his friend Whitefield over this issue.

Theologians on both sides of the controversy have embraced so much of the argumentation of this issue that the compatibility of the two sides is overlooked. The basis of Evangelical faith and practice is the Sovereignty of God and the need of the mortal sinner to repent and cast him or herself on His mercy.

Lorenzo Dow was a “whosoever will” man, and mocked any Calvinist as an “A-double-L-part” person. Dow's folksy explanation of what a Calvinist was may have won him a few followers in the young democracy, but today we owe it to a thinking constituency to keep our facts straight before launching into a battle over a non-essential controversy.

## **Humanism as a first step toward a Revival Movement**

Humanism is a bad word among Christians today. This sentiment is justified as so many humanists, starting with Bertrand Russell, have been debunking the cause of Christ in the world. But the original humanists were champions of our Protestant perception of Christianity. For instance, Desiderius Erasmus may not have joined the Protestant movement, but his conviction that the mortal does not need a priestly mediator to know God led him to translate the Bible from original languages into vernacular, and to interpret the New Testament using the historical-critical method, rather than submitting to the traditional teachings of Roman Catholicism. The Logic of Peter Ramarus influenced James Arminius to move away from a traditional interpretation that had bogged the Dutch Reformed Church in argument over the timing of God's decree to save mankind. John Locke's thought influenced Jonathan Edwards to move away from the Calvinism of his day, to embrace a more accurate biblical concept of God's Sovereignty.

Historic humanism declared the worth of each person, and insisted that God cared for each person, though we are all sinners, and the traditions of the church cannot be used to keep a sinner out of the comfort of the Lord and His church. As long as the church is building its teaching on the solid foundation of biblical truth, there can never be compromise with worldly philosophies; but evangelical teaching must start with Christ's Good News of salvation for all whom God is calling to Himself. Regardless of the degree of an individual's past sins (that is, what we can see anyway – all are unworthy), we must come to the place where we recognize that an individual who inquires after salvation *is* being drawn by the Lord to Himself. Stillness, or waiting around for God to simply save some without any invitation by the church or one of its evangelists is not honoring to the



Sovereign Lord who commands us to present the evangelion to every person, then baptize recipients into the body of Christ and teach them to obey the words of Christ.<sup>7</sup> The understanding of the Trinity of God and the attributes of God, including His Sovereignty, are the subject of our teaching after a person has received the indwelling, teaching Holy Spirit. The first step is to declare hope to the hopeless human.

### **Democracy as an Incubator for Revival**

For a reason known only to the Lord, the principles of democracy seem strongly united with the evangelical message. Are the two bedfellows? Obviously not. But repressive theological systems have failed throughout the world to raise up individuals who crave a life lived for God. Churches built upon democratic principles (the priesthood of all believers) are open to the gifts and talents that God has given all believers.

### **Neo-Calvinist Discipleship to prevent Decline**

Arminianism and Humanism have their place in initiating a Revival Movement, but the sustenance of such a Revival depends on the teaching of self-declared Calvinists, particularly the new breed of Grace theologians that are becoming prominent today. Never in the history of the church has so much sound doctrine been so available as it is today, through blogs, print-on-demand books, traditional print media, websites, and online resources. Just “google” any theologian from the past 2,000 years and it is most likely you will be taken to a site that offers that person’s whole repertoire of theological writings, usually at no cost. The doctrines of grace – true grace – are propounded daily in

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<sup>7</sup> The Bible, Matthew 28:19-20: these verses are often emphasized but rarely practiced.

devotional and instructional web logs, and Christians or seekers can subscribe to these sites, once again at little or no cost. Hucksters still haunt the airwaves and the internet as they have since the invention of broadcast media, but the internet and sites such as Amazon have so democratized media that almost anyone can afford to get her words out there to be read and absorbed. There has been a gratifying increase in “discipleship” material that is solid and helpful. CDs and DVDs from the 1990s have been supplemented with the sermons of thousands of local pastors.

Evangelical seminaries are producing pastoral scholars, who now have access to web resources to get their take on the gospel onto thousands of computers worldwide, for almost no cost. While this paper has expressed consternation at the misunderstanding of theological controversy, many authors are making biblical teaching on God’s gracious provision for our salvation available to whoever will search for it, and often youtube will suggest religious humor and Christian teaching video sources.

### **New-Light Status Quo**

The First Great Awakening brought attention to the weakened state of the Puritan church in New England. Those who insisted on remaining Old Lights had fallen into a state of passionless goose-step religion that lost life and attractiveness. The New Lights demanded that faith in Christ mean something and that disciples follow gladly. Practice rather than assent became the watchword for those who claimed to belong to the Lord. Humans seek security over chaos, though, and security is found in what has become known as the “status quo.” This is a nasty term for “the mess we are in.” But need we be in a mess? Can obedience to the Lord become our routine?

This paper has declared that Revival is necessary because of the heaviness of sin that drags us away from the path of obedience. But what if regular course correction were employed to keep us centered on the path? What if the church as a body of believers regularly assessed the individual believers to assist them in living balanced, godly lives? Isn't this what Jesus had in mind in the first place?

Lorenzo Dow recommended days spent in prayer and various other exercises in religion. He even paid people to pray all day, or to read God's Word. He appointed his preaching services in every small town in the US of his time, sometimes a year in advance, to make sure those towns would hear a gospel message, albeit one that was presented eccentrically. His Journal often records the progress he notices in clusters of believers united in Methodist Societies or other religious groups, as he returns to a town months or years later. His very presence was an encouragement, as was his certain and almost always immediate absence as he headed off to the next town, leaving inspired believers to form or join societies for their spiritual growth.

### **Grounding believers for spiritual growth**

A weakness in the small church (and some larger churches) is the tendency to cut adrift new believers without providing spiritual growth resources. It is felt that simply attending the programs of the church will result in mature believers. Spiritual growth is by its nature intentional, and new believers do not always know what growth choices to make on their own. Churches must implement growth mechanisms to protect the novices and developing Christians under their charge.

## **Wesley's Model for Discipleship: A Calvinist and Arminian Compromise**

All who knew him raved about John Wesley's organizational skills. He had a talent for borrowing ideas that worked from any source available to him. We can enumerate Wesley's theological influences, including the Church of England, Patristics, Dissenters, German Pietists, and contemporary Evangelicals. His time with the Moravians at Herrnhut in 1739 gave him his insight into organizing his Methodists.

Herrnhut was Count Nicolas von Zinzendorf's estate and the base camp of the Moravian missionary enterprise. At Herrnhut all residents were divided into classes by gender and age – five male classes and five females. The purpose of the classes was biblical instruction and discussion of issues pertinent to the continuance of the harmony of the settlement. There was a second tier of division among the residents of Herrnhut: ninety bands of four to six members, “each of which meets twice a week at least, but most of them three times a week, to confess their faults one to another, and pray for one another, that they may be healed.”<sup>8</sup>

After Wesley renounced connection with the Moravians over their antinomianism, he made sure to structure his Methodists almost exactly after the pattern of the believers at Herrnhut:

The “rungs” on Wesley's ladder of Christian discipleship were small interactive groups – the class meeting, the band, the select band, the penitent band, and the society. Each group within the system was designed to accomplish a specific developmental purpose, and each group had its own carefully defined roles and procedures to ensure that the central objectives were accomplished.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> D. Michael Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meeting*, (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, Inc., 1997), 59.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson, 11.

As the names of the bands imply, the select bands were for those members of the society most interested in seeking after personal holiness, the penitent bands operated like an early Alcoholics Anonymous and were for individuals with severe social and moral problems, and in need of “more stringent and forceful treatment,”<sup>10</sup> and the bands in general were for general members of the Methodist Society.

The Class Meeting was initiated as a means of paying off society debts. Every member was to attend, and bring a penny to each meeting. They developed into something resembling Wesley’s early morning Oxford Holy Club Bible exposition meetings, but were held on a weeknight evening.<sup>11</sup> Much of Wesley’s theology was discussed, and various Bible texts, especially those texts appearing in Wesley’s Standard Sermons.<sup>12</sup> The Class Meeting are a model for today’s cell groups or small groups. Each class contained about twelve society members, and leaders met with each of the weeknight classes to interview attendees regarding their progress in holiness. Leadership in the classes was open to women, and the democracy of the classes is credited for overturning the “Toryism” of the Methodist Connexion.<sup>13</sup>

The bands were smaller, met more often, did not require the participation of church leaders, and were much more personal. Our concept of Accountability Groups is based on this model. There were suggested questions the attendees could use:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptation have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt to be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?

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<sup>10</sup> Henderson, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Henderson, 94.

<sup>12</sup> John Wesley’s 52 Standard Sermons, Rev. N. Burwash, S.T.D., *Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part I, The Sermons, with Introductions, Analysis, and Notes, 1881*, (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> Henderson, 100.

Of course it would be popular today to ask, “Have you lied in any of these answers?” These meetings were helpful to the participants. And conducting the meetings without the oversight of the society leaders empowered the band members in their own peer leadership. Henderson calls the whole concept a “masterpiece of group psychology.”<sup>14</sup>

Lorenzo Dow did not have this kind of organizational skill, but at least he directed his listeners into the Methodist system for training in righteousness. Obviously one leader called by God to influence His church cannot have all gifts necessary for the overall health of all members. An evangelist gladly entrusts the care of souls to those called by God to oversee ongoing spiritual growth. The church today is no different from the church of the 1700s or 1800s – people have spiritual and emotional needs that directive conversation could address. The church is designed by God to be the force in this world to restore sinners to the *imago dei*, and mitigate the effects of sin in the believer.

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<sup>14</sup> Henderson, 120.

## CONCLUSION

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in England during the days of Lorenzo Dow's ministry had already settled into institutional efficiency; hence the need for other expressions of vibrant Christianity such as the Primitive Methodist Connexion in its early years. In the United States during Dow's lifetime the Methodist Episcopal Church was still alive and reaching thousands of Americans with the truth of the gospel.

Dow was a catalyst for the Methodism of both nations. In England and Ireland he reminded the common man of the freedom and vitality that could be remembered from the early days of revival among the Methodists. In the young United States Dow acted as a force to enrich the still-vital preaching of the travelling Methodist itinerants.

This paper asserts that certain traits can be distilled from the character of Crazy Lorenzo Dow: a strong sense of "call;" a commitment to travelling ministry; a healthy disregard for settled ministry and leadership; and a commitment to the commonness of humanity, as well as a cautiously sacrificial bond of marriage for the evangelist.

This paper also asserts that the church – using Methodism as an example – can renew its vitality and restore effective ministry among those who attend and those who do not yet attend the services of the church.

Finally, this paper presented the needs of the individual who hears the evangelist and craves the soul care the church has to offer. By combining characteristics of a Calvinist and an Arminian approach to preparing disciples to follow Jesus, the gospel church can effectively raise up Christians who will withstand the gravity of sin's pull and

continue the mission of the church to present the gospel to unbelievers, baptize them into the church, and train them in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Several obstacles must be overcome to see this happen. Our reluctance to engage in focused prayer and Bible study, as well as our awkwardness in working together with other believers must be addressed. Then we must overcome our unwillingness to hire for full-time service those who are loose cannons, or odd in their approach, or incompatible with our need to maintain the church “as is.” Of course we would have to come up with an equitable way of hiring and paying people who would not be placed in traditional roles (one pastor for one church), but would be able to network among several churches, making multiple talents available to several churches. The traditional notion of soul care must be spread among church members who have been involved in accountability groups within the church. These groups would be operated on a “tough love” basis, and would become the incubators for all leadership in the churches, from those who pastor and teach, and those who evangelize full-time.

The model for our disciple training would start with a “whosoever will” mindset to speak to the identity needs that new believers experience, but then would have to move into a sovereignty of God motif to ground mature believers into a God-given identity.

We would have to fully our concept of what it means to convert – repentance, infilling, new birth, guidance in righteousness by the Holy Spirit.

Dow’s audience was new to freedom and democracy, while we face people immune to freedom’s novelty and addicted to comfort. Still the people around us have the same bondage sinners have always had. A church that entertains the principles of the



Lorenzo Dow Factor would soon find the Lord snapping us out of our complacency and getting us back into the lives of sinners and saints.

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## VITA

David Allen has been a Primitive Methodist all his life, and is the son of a pastor. He has served as a pastor in the PMC for over thirty years, in Eastern and Western Pennsylvania, Upstate New York, Central Florida, and for over 20 years in New England.

He attended colleges in Philadelphia, Jerusalem and graduated from United Wesleyan College in Allentown, PA in 1983. He attended seminaries in Nyack, NY, Orlando, FL, and graduated with an MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA in 2006. He is currently a candidate in the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell, on the track, Revival and Reform: Renewing Congregational Life in the Twenty-First Century. He expects to graduate in May, 2015.

Allen currently lives in Lowell, MA with his wife, Rene' and three children.